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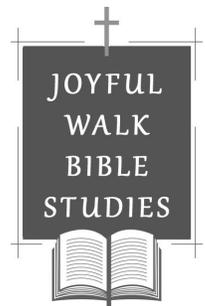
# Live Out His Love

Experience & Share  
the Compassion of Jesus for Women

A Study of New Testament Women

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MELANIE NEWTON



We extend our heartfelt thanks to the many women who served as editors for this study guide. Without your help, we would never have accomplished this monumental task in a timely manner.

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Melanie Newton is the author of “Graceful Beginnings” books for anyone new to the Bible and “Joyful Walk Bible Studies” for established Christians. Her mission is to help women learn to study the Bible for themselves and to grow their Bible-teaching skills to lead others. For questions about the use of this study guide, please visit [melaniemnewton.com](http://melaniemnewton.com) to contact us.

*Joyful Walk Bible Studies* are grace-based studies for women of all ages. Each study guide follows the inductive method of Bible study (observation, interpretation, application) in a warm and inviting format.

We pray that you and your group will find *Live Out His Love* to be a resource that God will use to strengthen you in your faith walk with Him.

*Christ-Focused • Bible-Rich • Grace-Based*





## Melanie Newton

Melanie Newton is a Louisiana girl who made the choice to follow Jesus while attending LSU. She and her husband Ron married and moved to Texas for him to attend Dallas Theological Seminary. They stayed in Texas where Ron led a wilderness camping ministry for troubled youth for many years. Ron now helps corporations with their challenging employees and is the author of the top-rated business book, *No Jerks on the Job*.

Melanie jumped into raising three Texas-born children and serving in ministry to women at her church. Through the years, the Lord has given her opportunity to do Bible teaching and to write grace-based Bible studies for women that are now available from her website ([melanienewton.com](http://melanienewton.com)) and on Bible.org. *Graceful Beginnings* books are for anyone new to the Bible. *Joyful Walk Bible Studies* are for maturing Christians.

Melanie is a speaker, author, and trainer with Joyful Walk Ministries. Her mission is to help women learn to study the Bible for themselves and to grow their Bible-teaching skills to lead others. Her heart's desire is to encourage you to have a joyful relationship with Jesus Christ so you are willing to share that experience with others around you.

*Jesus took hold of me in 1972, and I have been on this great adventure ever since. My life is a gift of God, full of blessings in the midst of difficult challenges. The more I have learned and experienced God's absolutely amazing grace, the more I have discovered my faith walk to be a joyful one. I am still seeking that joyful walk every day.*

*Melanie*

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## **Other Bible Studies by Melanie Newton**

### ***Graceful Beginnings Series books for anyone new to the Bible:***

- A Fresh Start (basics for new Christians)
- Painting the Portrait of Jesus (the Gospel of John)
- The God You Can Know (the character of God)
- Grace Overflowing (an overview of Paul's 13 letters)
- The Walk from Fear to Faith (7 Old Testament women)
- Satisfied by His Love (women who knew Jesus)
- Seek the Treasure (study of Ephesians)
- Pathways to a Joyful Walk (6 pathways to a life filled with joy))

### ***Joyful Walk Bible Studies for growing Christians:***

- Graceful Living (the essentials for a joyful Christian life)
- Everyday Women, Ever Faithful God (Old Testament women, Use the following listener guide.)
- Profiles of Perseverance (Old Testament men, also in Spanish)
- Reboot, Renew, Rejoice (1 and 2 Chronicles)
- Live Out His Love (New Testament women)
- Heartbreak to Hope (the Gospel of Mark)
- Radical Acts (Acts)
- The God-Dependent Woman (2 Corinthians)
- Knowing Jesus, Knowing Joy (Philippians, also in Spanish)
- Healthy Living (Colossians and Philemon)
- Adorn Yourself with Godliness (1 Timothy and Titus, also in Spanish)
- Perspective (1 and 2 Thessalonians)
- To Be Found Faithful (2 Timothy)
- Connecting Faith to Life on Planet Earth (Genesis 1-11; Revelation)
- Graceful Living Today (a devotional journal for a joyful life)

### ***Leading Resources***

- Be a Christ-Focused Small Group Leader (preparing to lead a women's small group)
- Leap into Lifestyle Disciplemaking (bring others with you as you follow Christ)
- Bible Study Leadership Made Easy (online video course)

Download our catalogue and get resources for your spiritual growth at [melaniemnewton.com](http://melaniemnewton.com).

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## Using This Study Guide

This study guide consists of 11 lessons covering the lives of 16 women in New Testament history. For those who are not familiar with the culture of the New Testament, each lesson includes brief historical insights into the culture relevant to the lesson.

The lessons are divided into 5 daily sections (about 20 minutes in length). The first 4 sections contain a detail study of the passages. The last section is a podcast that provides additional insight to the lesson. If you cannot do the entire lesson one week, please read the Bible passages related to the women being studied the lesson and try to do the “Pray & Love” questions.

### The Basic Study

Each lesson includes core questions covering the passage narrative. These core questions will take you through the process of inductive Bible study—observation, interpretation, and application. The process is more easily understood in the context of answering these questions:

- What does the passage say? (*Observation: what is actually there*)
- What does it mean? (*Interpretation: the author’s intended meaning*) Many of the questions are interpretation questions.
- How does this apply to me today? (*Application: making it personal*) **Live Out His Love** questions lead you to introspection and application of a specific truth to your life. **Pray and Love** questions direct you to commit to praying for and planning ways to intentionally connect with nonbelievers in your sphere of influence. At least one question in each lesson will help you learn how to share your faith with others. This is called “Disciplemaking.”

### Study Enhancements

*Deeper Discoveries (optional):* Embedded within the sections are *optional* questions for further research of subjects we do not have time to cover adequately in the lessons or contain information that significantly enhance the basic study. If you are meeting with a small group, your leader may give you the opportunity to share your “discoveries.”

*Study Aids:* To aid in proper interpretation and application of the study, additional study aids are located where appropriate in the lesson:

- Historical Insights
- Scriptural Insights
- From the Greek (definitions of Greek words)
- Focus on the Meaning
- Think About It (thoughtful reflection)

*Other useful study tools:* Use online tools or apps such as The Bible app from Life.church or Blue Letter Bible app to find *cross references* (verses with similar content to what you are studying) and meanings of the *original Greek words or phrases* used (usually called “interlinear”). You can also look at any verse in *various Bible translations* to help with understanding what it is saying. Feel free to add your own study at the end of each lesson.

## Podcasts

Find podcasts coordinating with these lessons at [melanienewton.com/podcasts](http://melanienewton.com/podcasts) and most other podcast channels. Choose “2: Live Out His Love, Satisfied by His Love (New Testament Women).” Listen to the first podcast as an introduction to the study. You can also search for those podcasts by name on your favorite podcast channel and make your own playlist.

## Discussion Group Guidelines

Anyone can do this study alone. If you are doing this as part of a group, we suggest you use the following guidelines to maintain a safe environment for your group members to learn together.

1. **Attend consistently** whether your lesson is done or not. You will learn from the other women, and they want to get to know you.
2. **Set aside time** to work through the study questions. The goal of Bible study is to **get to know** Jesus. He will change your life.
3. **Share your insights** from your personal study time. As you spend time in the Bible, Jesus will teach you truth through His Spirit inside you.
4. **Respect each other’s insights**. Listen thoughtfully. Encourage each other as you interact. Refrain from dominating the discussion if you have a tendency to be talkative. 😊
5. **Celebrate our unity** in Christ. Avoid bringing up controversial subjects such as politics, divisive issues, and denominational differences.
6. **Maintain confidentiality**. Remember that anything shared during the group time is not to leave the **group** (unless permission is granted by the one sharing).
7. **Pray for one another** as sisters in Christ.
8. **Get to know the women** in your group. Please do not use your small group members for solicitation purposes for home businesses, though.

There is a [Small Group Discussion Guide](#) located at the end of this book. Anyone can use the guide to lead a group through a discussion of the questions in this study. This is especially useful for groups that have less than two hours to meet together.

*Enjoy your Joyful Walk Bible Study!*

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## Historical Information

### What Happened before New Testament Times

During the exile from their homeland (605-538 BC), the people of Israel living in Babylonian territory (modern Iraq) were cut off from the temple and surrounded by pagan religious practices, so they focused on what they had retained—the Law (the first five books of the Bible, also known as the Pentateuch or the Torah) and the belief that they were still God's people. Personal piety and prayer replaced the sacrifices now denied to them. The new center of worship became the local synagogue (like a church community). Judaism became a faith that could be practiced wherever the Torah could be carried. This helped to preserve Judaism and prepare the way for the Christian gospel. The Diaspora (dispersion) of Israel begun in the exile accelerated during the years that followed so that by Jesus' time Jews filled every land. Jews living outside the land of Israel concentrated their religious life in the study of the Torah and the life of the synagogue. The missionaries of the early church began their outreach ministries among the Diaspora using the Greek translation of the Old Testament. "God-fearing" Gentiles (non-Jewish people who believed in the Jewish God and followed some of the Law) became part of many Jewish synagogues.

After the exile, Israel existed as a minor territory in a succession of larger empires—Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman. The rulers were often ruthless against the Jews and continually tried to force idolatry on the Jewish people. When Rome took over in 63 BC, the conquering general massacred priests in the performance of their duties and entered the Most Holy Place. This atrocity began Roman rule in a way that Jews could neither forgive nor forget! Herod, a non-Jew, was appointed king by the Roman Senate in 40 BC, but he was subject to Rome.

During this time period, a religious group later known as the Pharisees formed to keep Israel pure from idolatry, promoting the keeping of the Law as the only way that the Jews would be able to live righteously before God in a world that had changed drastically since the days of Moses. Though few in number, they enjoyed the support of the people and were the only party to survive the destruction of the temple in AD 70, thus being the spiritual progenitors of modern Judaism.

### New Testament Summary

The New Testament opens with the births of John and Jesus. About 30 years later, John challenged the Jews to indicate their repentance (turning from sin and toward God) by submitting to water baptism—a familiar Old Testament practice used for repentance as well as when a Gentile converted to Judaism (to be washed clean of idolatry).

Jesus, God's incarnate Son, publicly showed the world what God is like and taught His perfect ways for 3 – 3½ years. After preparing 12 disciples to continue Christ's earthly work, He died voluntarily on a cross for mankind's sin, rose from the dead, and returned to heaven. The account of His earthly life is recorded in 4 books known as the Gospels (the biblical books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John named after the compiler of each account).

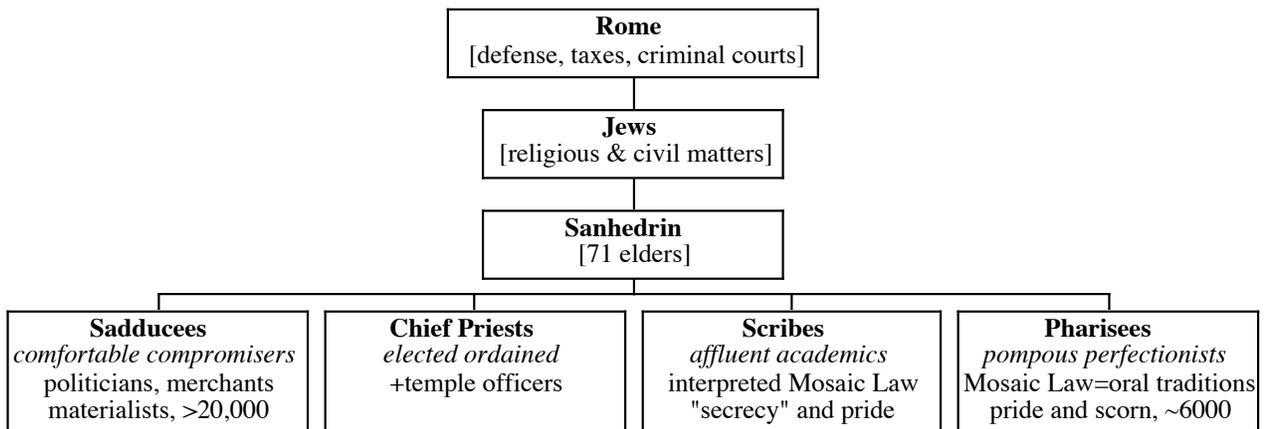
After Jesus' return to heaven, the followers of Christ were then empowered by the Holy Spirit and spread God's salvation message among the Jews, a number of whom believed in Christ. The apostle Paul and others carried the good news to the Gentiles during 3 missionary journeys (much of this recorded in the book of Acts). Paul wrote 13 New Testament letters to churches & individuals (Romans through Philemon). The section in our Bible from Hebrews to Jude contains 8 additional letters penned by five men, including two apostles (Peter and John) and two of Jesus' half-brothers (James and Jude). The author of Hebrews is unknown. The apostle John also recorded Revelation, which summarizes God's final program for the world. The Bible ends as it began—with a new, sinless creation.

## New Testament Timeline

**No one is certain of the dates of Jesus' birth or death. The years below are based on Luke 3:23, "Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry."**

Historical Period	Years AD	Woman Studied
Jesus' Lifetime & Ministry	4 BC – 30 AD	Samaritan Woman, Immoral Woman, Adulterous Woman Sick Woman & Dead Girl, Canaanite Woman Crippled Woman, Widow of Nain, Mary & Martha Mary Magdalene, Mary the Mother of Jesus
The Early Church	30 – 65 AD	Tabitha, Lydia, Priscilla, Phoebe

## Israel's Political and Religious Authorities



### Religious Leaders in Jesus' Day

The **Pharisees** were a religious society of ~6,000 men who strictly obeyed the law of God as interpreted by the teachers of the law (also called scribes). This law consisted of the written Mosaic Law (found in the first five books of the Old Testament) plus the tradition of the elders (the oral law), containing hundreds of rules and prohibitions that were equally important to God's Law. They considered themselves to be Israel's spiritual leaders.

The **scribes**, also called lawyers or teachers of the Law, were an upper-class group of learned Jews who thoroughly knew and, therefore, interpreted the Mosaic Law. They were associated with the Pharisees. Many of them taught in the local seminary in Jerusalem. According to the tradition of the scribes, there were "secrets" of interpretation that they did not share with the common people thinking that God intended to leave the mass of people ignorant of His reasons for requiring certain things under the Law.

The **Sadducees** came from the leading families of Israel (e.g., the priests, merchants, and aristocrats). The high priests and most powerful members of the priesthood were mainly Sadducees. The Sadducees rejected the tradition of the elders and did not believe in angels or miracles. They tended to be more upper class as comfortable compromisers with the Roman rulers. It has been estimated that in Jerusalem alone there were more than 20,000 associated with the Sadducees. Pharisees, by contrast, were middle class and more religious than the Sadducees.

The **Chief Priests** usually came from the class of Sadducees. This group included all the temple officers, including the High Priest and the captain of the temple.

Representatives from all these groups sat on the **Sanhedrin**, a religious governing body of 71 Jewish elders. They were elected, and then ordained by the laying on of hands. Their responsibilities included governing the Jewish community in religious matters related to the Law.

## Live Out His Love

The Lord Jesus demonstrated in His life on earth how much He loved and valued women. He taught, forgave, accepted, and gave new life to them. Because His care for them was so countercultural to what they had previously known, women responded with love for Him and a desire to serve Him. Many of them had walks of faith that brought challenges as well as times of joy. They focused on following Jesus and serving Him in their daily lives, sharing His love with others so they could benefit from Jesus' great love for women, also. Jesus Christ entered into the midst of their lives, visibly representing God to them, loving them dearly, and changing their lives forever! He does the same for you and me today.

Today, many women like you and I are longing for more direction in our walks of faith than attending a weekly Bible study and the annual Christmas brunch. That longing is a desire put in our hearts by God's Spirit to fulfill the purpose we have while on earth serving the Lord Jesus in our daily lives. That purpose is to live for Him, experience His love for us, and share His love with others around us.

Jesus is calling us! His commission to His followers to share the good news about Him with others is given to everyday people like you and I are, to be fulfilled in the everyday world in which we "live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Since Jesus is the one calling you to join Him on mission every day, then He will enable you to do what He asks you to do. Learn from Him how to make disciples. And it might even be fun!

My heart's desire is to encourage you through this study to have a joyful, loving relationship with Jesus Christ for yourself so that you are willing to share that experience with others around you.

Just relax, trust in Him, and begin an adventure that will transform your life and others as well. Are you ready for adventure? It is going to be a great journey. I am so glad to be walking beside you!

*Melanie*

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast "[New Testament Women Learn How Jesus Satisfies Our Hearts](#)" before doing Lesson One as an introduction to the whole study. You will find the listener guide on the next page.

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The following is the listener guide the podcast “[New Testament Women Learn How Jesus Satisfies Our Hearts](#).” We recommend that you listen to this before doing Lesson One as an introduction to the whole study.

## New Testament Women Learn How Jesus Satisfies Our Hearts

Only God can satisfy a spiritually thirsty heart.

A relationship with another human cannot satisfy a spiritually thirsty heart. Only God can. His plan to do that included coming to earth to take on a human body and live as a human among us. Enter Jesus, the one who demonstrated God’s love for women.

### Jesus demonstrated God’s love for women

- Jesus Christ entered into the midst of His Jewish culture, influenced by Greek and Roman traditions, with a radically different value system in the way He regarded women. His compassion for women elevated their position in society and gave them equal relationship with Him.
- How Jesus was radically different from His culture:
  - Speaking to women publicly when a rabbi would not speak publicly to his wife.
  - Letting them travel with Him and support Him with their own money.
  - Teaching women openly and continually when the rabbis did not consider them able to be educated.
  - Defending them when they were criticized.
  - Acting with compassion toward women in healing their loved ones.
  - Making them the first witnesses to His resurrection to spread the good news.
- Jesus never spoke condescendingly to women, never made derogatory jokes about them, nor did he ever humiliate them. Women who knew Him loved Him. They wanted to follow and serve Him

### Jesus is the one who understands women

- As Creator, **He designed us with a mind to know God, emotions to love God, and a will to obey God.** That comes in the package we receive at birth.
- Our female minds need to be filled with the knowledge of Him so that our hearts may respond with great love for Him and our wills can choose to obey Him.
- Jesus knows us backwards and forwards. He knows our emotional nature, our need for security and significance, and even our hormones! He understands our need to nurture and to be loved—both from those humans closest to us and from our Creator God.

- **Here is a key truth I want you to grasp.** A relationship with Jesus satisfies every spiritual need that you have. Every single one of them. You do not need to go anywhere else to get those deep needs satisfied.

## Jesus is the one who meets our spiritual needs

*Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all His benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who **satisfies your desires with good things** so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. (Psalm 103:2-5)*

- Do you need forgiveness? Jesus does that. Do you need healing and hope for dire circumstances? Jesus does that. Do you feel like you are in spiritual bondage? Jesus can free you from that. Do you need assurance that you are loved? Jesus crowns you with His love and compassion. To be crowned with compassion means to be surrounded with it so that you have a sense of God's favor and protection. A satisfied heart can go forward with complete assurance that our God knows how to love you well!
- God promises to satisfy your heart's desires with good things. You will be so satisfied that you will feel renewed and released to soar like an eagle. And He fills us with everything we need to feel satisfied.

Our God created us with a spiritual thirst for a relationship with Him. A relationship with another human cannot satisfy that thirst. Only God can satisfy the thirsty heart.

*He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things. (Psalm 107:9)*

Where in your life so you need Jesus to satisfy your heart desires with good things?

*Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the goodness of His love. Then, live out that love.*

*Outcast Women—Identified by Lifestyle*

## Lesson 1: A Samaritan Woman

Time Period: Jesus' First Year of Ministry, ~30 AD

### Day One Study

#### ***The quest for fulfillment***

The quest for fulfillment became the driving force behind women of the '80s and '90s. As women tuned into the highly mobile, high-tech society around them, they begin to turn their energies to new frontiers. To excel, to succeed, and even to surpass the accomplishments of their male counterparts has been the goal of many women who have challenged men's domain. Now, however, as women examine who they have become, many are wondering where they really belong. It has become painfully clear that achievement and success have not delivered the payoff of personal fulfillment that women have sought. In the brief reflective spaces sandwiched between their frenzied commitments, women are now realizing that external accomplishments do not meet their deepest inner longings. So the search for fulfillment continues.

The desire to find continuity and meaning draws women toward the spiritual arena where cults are flourishing. As believers, we know that only Jesus can fill the void in a woman's life. What women desperately need today is exposure to vital Christianity.

All of us rub shoulders with a variety of women every day—women with whom we share a coffee or lunch break, mothers who trade off car-pooling children, neighbors, and friends. They all need to know the answers to these questions, "Who is Jesus Christ?" and "Why did He come?" They also need the answer to "How did He treat women?" and "How can women know Him today?"

To fully appreciate Jesus' approach to women, we need to resist our impulse to approach Scripture from our twenty-first century cultural perspective. Our understanding of Scripture is more accurate if we step back in time into the shoes of the women of the first century AD.

#### ***Connecting with New Testament Women***

If you have limited knowledge of the New Testament, those women who lived at that time may be strangers to you. When you read the gospels, you can easily think, "What's written in it happened so long ago! What do those women have in common with me? They did not live in *my* world." Yet, they were still women like you and I are.

As everyday women, they cooked meals, did laundry, and raised children. They had responsibilities inside and outside of their homes including home businesses. They experienced hormone fluctuations and menopause. They laughed with their friends, differed with their mates, and cried when a loved one died. I bet they all found ways to use their 20,000 words per day. ☺ At one time, they were 20-somethings, then 40-somethings, then 60-somethings and more. They wore beads, earrings, and ankle bracelets. Their hair needed to be combed and fixed, and it turned grey as they aged. No doubt, some of them, if not all, had something on their bodies that sagged!

These women also experienced fear at various times just like we do. They faced rejection from peers, sick family members, and disappointments. They faced trauma and surprise houseguests. They even had "bad" days when things did not go right, sometimes due to their own choices. These were everyday women, just like we are. Their stories—snippets of their biographies—are preserved for us to get to know them.

**Life for Women in Jesus' Time (You'll get more information throughout the lessons.)**

What was it like to be a woman living around the rim of the Mediterranean during Jesus' time? In both Greek and Roman cultures, women held a second-rate status. Their legal rights were practically nonexistent. In fact, only a husband could petition for a divorce. In such a society, permissive polygamy was considered normal—for men. The owning of multiple women was an indication of wealth. Needless to say, such a practice only further relegated women to an inferior position since they were often treated like property.

Jewish women fared better than their Greek and Roman contemporaries because of God's built-in protections for them in the Mosaic Law. A married woman with children did hold a certain place of honor as a wife and mother, but even that position was tied to her ability to produce male children. The religious leaders taught that women were uneducable and considered them unreliable as courtroom witnesses. In the culture, women were even held responsible for the lustful temptations that men suffered. None of these negatives came from God or His Word.

As the radical rabbi, Jesus treated women as no man had ever treated them before. His warmth, personal attention, tenderness, sound teaching, and compassion toward women were revolutionary. He openly demonstrated His love for each individual He met—both men and women—for whom He would ultimately die.

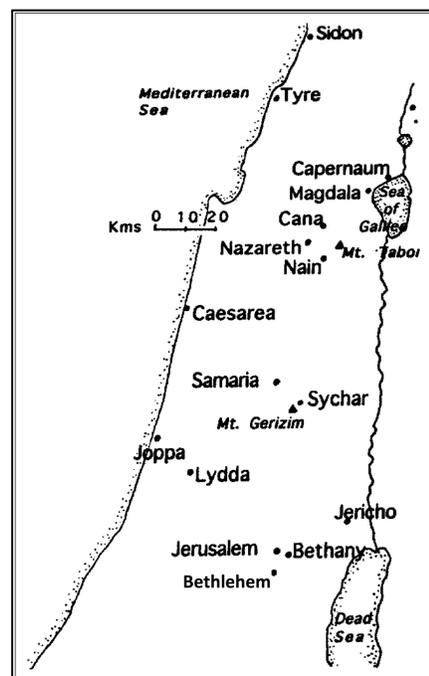
Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

1. Read John 2:24-25; 3:1-15. Discuss Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus—where it started and where Jesus took it.

**Scriptural Insight:** As God, He sees beyond the superficial to people's hearts (1 Sam. 16:7; Ps. 139; Acts 1:24). John 3 and 4 give illustrations of this truth. (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 280)

2. Read John 4:1-6. What decisions did Jesus make for Himself and for His disciples?

**Historical Insight:** To go through Samaria "was the shortest route from Judea to Galilee but not the only way. The other route was through Perea, east of the Jordan River...In Jesus' day, the Jews, because of their hatred for the Samaritans, normally took the eastern route in order to avoid Samaria." (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, pp. 284-285.)



3. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Use a commentary, study notes or the internet to answer this: Why was there such animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans? What were the social consequences of traveling through Samaria?
  
4. Who would benefit from Jesus' decision to go through Samaria? Think current and future.

**Scriptural Insight:** In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus commissioned His followers to go beyond their own homes to make disciples. In Acts 1:8, Jesus once again said to His disciples that they would be His witnesses to not only Judea but also Samaria and to the ends of the earth. That would include going to other hostile territories like Samaria was to the Jews. In Acts 8:4-25, Peter and John once again experienced the work of God in Samaria. Jesus is our example of being intentional to go where people need to know Him, even if it is not comfortable.

## Day Two Study

Read John 4:4-26. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

5. Describe the Samaritan woman through what is revealed about her in this text.

**Historical Insight:** A Rabbinic law of AD 66 stated that Samaritan women were considered as continually menstruating and thus unclean. Therefore, a Jew who drank from a Samaritan woman's vessel would become ceremonially unclean...The normal prejudices of the day prohibited public conversation between men and women, between Jews and Samaritans, and especially between strangers. A Jewish Rabbi would rather go thirsty than violate these proprieties. (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 285.)

6. How did Jesus begin a relationship with this woman then took the conversation to a deeper place (vv. 4-10)?

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**Scriptural Insight:** Jesus being truly human, experienced thirst, weariness, pain, and hunger. ... He also possesses all the attributes of Deity (all-knowing and all-powerful). (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, page 285.)

7. To understand vv. 10-15, read Jeremiah 2:13; John 7:37-39 and 1 John 5:11-12, 20.

- What does the phrase "living water" symbolize?

- What does the word "drink" symbolize?

- Therefore, what is Jesus saying to her?

- How did she respond?

8. **Live Out His Love:**

- If you remember, what did you seek to satisfy your built-in spiritual thirst before knowing Christ?

- What about now? How is your spiritual thirst being satisfied?

- Why can't a relationship with another human satisfy that thirst?

## Day Three Study

Read John 4:7-26. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

9. How and why does Jesus change the subject in vv. 16-18? (What attribute of God is He displaying here? See John 2:25.)

10. How and why does the Samaritan woman change the subject in vv. 19-20 and v. 25?

11. How does Jesus use her detour to declare truth about worship and about Himself?

**From the Greek:** The title “Christ” given to Jesus is from the Greek word *christos*, a translation of the Hebrew term “Messiah” meaning “anointed one.” The Old Testament prophets promised that the Messiah, as the anointed one of God, would come and do many wonderful things for God’s people, including restoring God’s Kingdom on earth. Christians are followers of Jesus, who is the Christ.

### **Conversation Starters and Transitions**

Consider the similarities between this conversation & Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus (Day One Study). In both, Jesus made conversation transitions from where it began to where He wanted it to go using an unexpected “hook” that captured their attention.

Nicodemus wanted Jesus to confirm that He was from God. Instead of talking about His miracles, Jesus declared that Nicodemus must be born again to see the kingdom of God—an unexpected transition. Jesus explained what that meant and how Nicodemus could make a commitment to believe in Him (John 3:14-15).

For the Samaritan woman, Jesus transitioned the conversation from drinking water to living water that would satisfy thirst forever—an unexpected transition. The woman was intrigued enough to want that living water. Jesus identified Himself as the Messiah. She had to make the commitment to believe in Him.

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12. **Pray & Love:** Preparing conversation starters and transitions centered around common topics helps you to be ready for any opportunities the Lord gives you. We will work on some of those now.

- What are some questions you can ask to start a conversation with someone? Consider anything you might have in common with her or that would lead to her sharing something about herself with you.

- Now, consider some conversation transitions you can make from common topics that result from your conversation starters. Examples of common topics are these: *corruption, evil, and sin; community; family; something good happened; high expectations; health; fear; or sports*. Pick one or two of these common topics and think what you would say to transition into sharing some aspect of your faith story or a specific biblical truth.

*For example: Family—"I am so glad God cares even more about my family than I do. What would I do without Him helping me to love my husband through all that we have experienced in life."*

**Your topics and transitions:**

***Ask Jesus to give you boldness and opportunity to use these soon.***



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**Think About It:** Consider the disciples' behavior in this incident (v. 27). Do you allow racial, cultural, or religious barriers to keep you from sharing Jesus' love with other people? Consider what life is like for those around you who have not experienced His love yet. Ask Jesus to give you love for them and to help you understand what they are feeling and needing from Him. Stepping into their lives to build intentional friendships is a means of displaying Jesus' love and compassion to them.

18. **Pray & Love:** Where are those women in your life who have not experienced Jesus' love yet? Where do you frequently see them? Start with where you are presently connected (school, work, gym, neighborhood, sports teams, your children's friends, community activities). Some you think are nonbelievers may be Christians who have never been discipled so their lives look like those of nonbelievers.

Pray for each one whenever you think about or see her.

Example: "Father, please send the Holy Spirit to work in the heart of \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in her name) to draw her to Jesus so she will trust in Him."

Ask Jesus to give you His love and compassion for her and to help you understand what she is feeling and needing from Him. How can you make the most of your connection to build a relationship with at least one woman on your list?

Commit to make the most of any connection you have to build a relationship with her and show Jesus' love and compassion to her. This next week, trust in Jesus to lead you to begin an intentional relationship with her so you can share Jesus' love with her.

See the "Pray & Love List" bookmark in the Resources Section (p. 141). Snap a picture of it or make a copy to use as you pray and love those the Holy Spirit brings to your mind.

19. **Live Out His Love:** Have you already trusted in Jesus to be your Savior? Think about your story of following Jesus and answer the questions below that fit your experience. God may use you in the same way to reach others for Christ.

- If you trusted in Jesus as a teen or an adult: What was life like for you before knowing Jesus? What triggered your need for Jesus? What did God use to draw you to Him?
- If you trusted in Jesus as a child, then drifted away from Him but later returned: What did God use to draw you back to Him?
- If you trusted in Jesus as a child and kept faithful to Him choosing while a teen or young adult to follow Him as a disciple: What kept you faithful? What did God use to keep you drawn to Himself? [Note: Every parent wants this for their child.]

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast "[Samaritan Woman: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Truth](#)" to reinforce what you have learned. Use the following listener guide.

## Samaritan Woman: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Truth

Jesus wants us to know the truth about Him (John 14:6).

On the night before His trial and crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples that He was going there to prepare a place for them, and they could follow because they knew the way to get there. But one of His disciples named Thomas was not so sure about this. So Thomas asked Jesus, "How can we know the way?" Jesus answered with a strong declaration of truth,

*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)*

We can confidently say this: Jesus is the **way** to know God as Father because He shows us the **truth** about God in His life, and He gives His **life** to anyone who believes in Him.

### Jesus is the WAY to know God as the Father.

Shortly after Jesus' resurrection and ascension back to Heaven, one of Jesus' followers named Peter confidently declared to the religious leaders of Jerusalem,

*Salvation is found in no one else [but Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)*

- The first Christians were so convinced of Jesus being the only way to know God and taught this truth everywhere so they were called "followers of the way." As a "follower of the way," the apostle Paul traveled extensively and preached that Jesus is the way to know God, the way to receive forgiveness for your sins, and the way to live a life that pleases God. Anyone who asked him, "How can I know God?" Paul would answer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." He is the WAY.
- Only one man died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins: Jesus. Only one man was ever resurrected from the dead with a new body that will never die again: Jesus. Only Jesus was truly God. Anyone who believes in Jesus can now have forgiveness of their sins and a relationship with God.
- No other religious leader has ever been resurrected from the dead, and they are all in their graves. Jesus is not in His grave. He was resurrected from the grave, given a new body, and is sitting in Heaven on His kingly throne ready to welcome you and me when we trust in Him.
- Jesus is the only way for any person to have a relationship with God. You have to start with that and believe that.

### Jesus is the TRUTH. He shows us the truth about God.

*If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him. (John 14:7)*

- When Jesus was on earth, He showed everyone the truth about God the Father. Jesus was loving and kind, showing us God is loving and kind. Jesus was always good, showing

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us that God is always good. Jesus showed us that God answers prayer and that God hates sin. Jesus was the living truth of God.

*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the **truth will set you free.** (John 8:31-32)*

- Knowing the truth will set you free from error, misconceptions, and bondage to lies that have prevented you from having a satisfying relationship with God in your life. Jesus was the truth of God back then and is still the truth of God. Truth never changes.

## **Jesus is the LIFE. He gives eternal life to anyone who believes in Him.**

- Eternal life starts the moment you believe in Jesus. It can never end. And no one can take it away from you!

*I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.... (John 11:25)*

- Even though your body dies, your soul lives on in Heaven where you will one day receive a new body just like Jesus' new body, one that will never die again. That is eternal life. But when Jesus said He is the life, He meant even more than that. Paul describes this beautifully in Galatians 2...

*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

- As part of God's family, God's Spirit comes to live inside you and enables you to live a life that pleases God your Father. He changes the way you think and feel to be more like the way Jesus thought and felt when He was on earth. Jesus is the truth that satisfies.

Our God created us with a spiritual thirst for a relationship with Him. Another human cannot satisfy that thirst. Only God can satisfy the thirsty heart. As the Bible promises,

*for He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things. (Psalm 107:9)*

Jesus satisfied the Samaritan woman's heart with truth about God. Jesus satisfies your heart with truth about God as well. A satisfied heart can stand firmly on the truth that brings real life and real love and fulfilling relationships to you.

*Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the goodness of His love. Then, live out that love.*

*Outcast Women—Identified by Lifestyle*

## Lesson 2: An Immoral Woman

Time: Jesus' Second Year of Ministry, ~31 AD

### Day One Study

#### ***Hospitality in Jesus' Time***

After Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, He continued teaching and performing many miracles and gained many followers. Consequently, His second year of ministry is known as the "Year of Popularity." During this period, Jesus chose His 12 Apostles and preached the Sermon on the Mount. He spent time traveling throughout Galilee and in the area of Capernaum. Located on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum was a sizable town in Jesus' day. Peter's house there became Jesus' base of operations during His extended ministry in Galilee. The inhabitants of Capernaum had many opportunities to see and hear Jesus.

Hospitality to guests was one of the most important social functions of the ancient Near East. A guest was highly honored even if he was a stranger passing through the town. Though there were inns in Jesus' day, most travelers looked for a home where they could spend the night. When a stranger appeared at or near someone's door close to evening, the head of the household almost always let him in and asked him to spend the night. If the homeowner refused to be hospitable, he could be snubbed by friends and neighbors. A host always kept in mind that someday he, too, might be a weary traveler looking for shelter and company.

Once inside, the host's wife or a servant brought water to wash the guest's feet, though the host might do it for a special guest. Since the roads were always dusty and most people walked, washing was an important step in making one's guest feel at home. That was common courtesy. When a guest was in the house, a large meal was prepared. Often the guest would be served first, and the host waited until he was finished. Other customs included anointing the guest with oil, which they used as soap, or even providing clothing for the mealtime.

According to custom, a guest should stay no longer than three days in his host's home. While there, he was protected by his host. On leaving, the host was to escort his guest a short distance, sending him safely on his way.

#### ***Pharisees—Religious "Leaders" of Jesus' Time***

The Pharisees were a religious society of ~6,000 men who strictly obeyed the law of God as interpreted by the scribes (lawyers). This law consisted of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) and the tradition of the elders (the oral law), containing hundreds of rules and prohibitions.

The Pharisees thought that the oral law, the rules made up by the religious leaders, was equally inspired and was thus to be followed as much as God's Law. They were especially particular about keeping the laws of tithing and ritual purity. Since the Pharisees found that other Jews were not careful enough about keeping these laws, they placed limits on their own contact with other Jews as well as with Gentiles (anyone who was not a Jew).

The Pharisees originally stood against evil in society and in personal lives. But by Jesus' day, many had become narrow-minded and petty, more concerned with rules than with God. They looked on sinful people as tainted and, therefore, to be avoided. They did not approve of a rabbi or any other important religious person mingling or eating with sinful people.

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Read Luke 7:18-35. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

1. Differentiate between how the general public viewed Jesus' ministry from how the Pharisees and teachers of the Law (lawyers) viewed it.

- General Public—
- Pharisees and lawyers—

2. Jesus gives an illustration in vv. 31-35. What principle did he give in v. 35?

3. How did Jesus view the Pharisees and lawyers? See also Matthew 6:2,5; 15:1-14 and Luke 11:42.

4. **Live Out His Love:** The New Testament teaches us as believers that we need to discern between good religious teachers/leaders who really care about “shepherding their flock” and the false ones who tear apart a flock of Christians as savage wolves do to sheep—usually through false teaching and selfish behavior.

- Who empowers us to discern? See 1 Corinthians 2:10-16 and Philipians 1:9-11.
- What does the Spirit give us as a basis of truth to be able to discern good influences from bad influences?
- Have you previously asked Jesus to help you discern influences in your life? What happened? If you need that discernment now, ask Jesus for it. This would be a great time to pray for your church leadership as well.

## Day Two Study

Read Luke 7:36-50. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Remember that the Pharisees considered themselves to be Israel's spiritual leaders (Nicodemus in Lesson One), the ones staying faithful to God's law. But they were also the ones you learned about in the Day One Study.

5. For what reason(s) might Simon the Pharisee have invited Jesus to have dinner with him?

**Think About It:** We should not overlook the fact that Jesus accepted an invitation to dinner from a Pharisee. He did not cut all the religious leaders off simply because most of them rejected Him. He dealt with people as individuals. He still does!

6. Describe the scene, including the woman and her actions.

**Historical Insight:** [The woman's] presence was not unusual for "social custom allowed needy people to visit such meals and to partake of some of the leftovers. Moreover, it was not unusual for people to drop in when a rabbi was visiting. Luke gallantly omitted describing why the woman "was a sinner," though...she was a member of the social class called sinners, whom the Pharisees regarded as treating the law loosely. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on Luke*, p. 120)

7. Put yourself in her place. Why *do you think* she was weeping, using her hair to wipe Jesus' feet?

8. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Find out everything you can about the alabaster jar and its perfume contents during Jesus' time—significance and value. Jewish women frequently wore such vials suspended from a cord around their necks. What was she giving to Jesus?

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## Day Three Study

Read Luke 7:36-50. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

9. Concentrate on Jesus' teachable moment with Simon who invited Him (as well as others present). How did Simon view the woman?

10. How did Jesus view the woman?

11. Discuss the irony in vs. 39-40 about Simon's thought and Jesus' response. Review John 2:25.

12. Summarize the actual parable told by Jesus to Simon and the others listening.

13. What is Jesus teaching through the parable?

**Think About It:** Your capacity to love others is directly tied to your capacity to get how deeply you have been forgiven. Agree or disagree?

14. How does Jesus rebuke Simon's harsh attitude through the parable? What is He implying the Pharisees think about themselves?

15. **Pray & Love:** Christians who have been filling their time with church activities and surrounding themselves with church friends for years may develop a critical "stay away from me" attitude towards the nonbelievers around them. We may forget how much we have been forgiven, also. And we tend to stay comfortable by insulating ourselves from worldly influences through staying away from worldly people, the same people who need to know Jesus' love in their lives.

- Read John 17:15-20. Jesus sent us into the world to impact it for Him not to insulate ourselves from it. In what ways do you feel this impact / insulate tension in your life?

When befriending those who have not experienced the love of Jesus yet, ask Jesus to help you not act shocked or offended by their language or behavior. Expect them to behave like nonbelievers—language, lifestyle, or relationships. Feel compassion for where they are. Remember, it is not our job to "fix" them but to give them hope by pointing them to Jesus who **can** give them new life. Consider how to be unshockable. Think through gracious and inviting language of your own.

- *What **not** to do or say:* What words, facial expressions, or body reactions would not be considered gracious, welcoming, or inviting to a nonbeliever?
- *What **to** do or say:* What words, facial expressions, or body reactions would likely be considered gracious, welcoming, or inviting to a nonbeliever?

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## Day Four Study

Read Luke 7:36-50. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

16. Concentrate on the results (vv. 47-50). What three things does Jesus grant to her?
17. What was her greatest heart need before knowing Jesus? How did Jesus meet that need?

**Focus on the Meaning:** The Greek word translated “forgiveness” means literally, “to send off or send away.” The result is “to separate the sin from the sinner” as described in Psalm 103:12 and Leviticus 16:20-22. Translated to what Jesus has done for us, forgiveness means, “Humanity’s guilt has been transferred to a substitute (Jesus Christ) and taken away.” Our problem before Christ came: Humans are guilty before a holy God. God’s answer is to take away the guilt. What a gracious gift!

18. As the woman left the house,
- Did Jesus give her everything she needed to begin to make a life change?
  - What choices must she make?
19. **Live Out His Love:** Jesus took notice of this “worthless” woman of the town, recognized her faith in Him, cleansed her of sin, and gave her new hope. No matter what you have done and who on earth does not forgive you, Jesus does—through faith in Him! Read Hebrews 10:22. Dwell on the FACT that Jesus will cleanse your conscience from guilt. Will you take Him at His word? If there is any past sin for which you are still feeling guilty, claim God’s complete forgiveness today. You can simply tell God,

*"Thank You for forgiving me, thank You for cleansing me, thank You for redeeming my sin and turning something evil into something good. Thank You for being bigger than my sins, and being able to turn things around in ways I cannot imagine. With Jesus' help, I receive the assurance that You have forgiven me. Help my heart catch up with my head on this. Help me to see that You allowed me to go down that dark path into sin because You are able to redeem even the worst things we do." (Sue Bohlin, Probe Ministries, Sept. 2012)*

Now, choose to believe you are forgiven and allow Jesus to cleanse your conscience from any residual guilt. Every time you think about it again, thank God for his amazing gift!

For additional application, read “Tammy’s Story: Intentional Loving” on page 142 in the Resources Section.

21. **Pray & Love:** The woman in today’s lesson needed another woman to come alongside her and help her get started with a new life. That act of coming alongside a new believer is called discipling or mentoring. Both refer to someone older in the Lord helping someone younger in the Lord understand and apply biblical truth in her life. This is critical for new Christians.

Once people trust Christ, do not leave them alone! New believers who begin the Christian life are at a critical point. Leaving the old life behind isn’t easy. Though the Holy Spirit provides the power to live victoriously, old patterns, old habits, and old temptations are still there. They need mature believers to walk alongside them while they take their first steps on the road to maturity. As a bare minimum, new believers need discipleship a minimum of once a week for eight weeks. The first eight weeks are sometimes when new converts face their greatest adjustments, strongest temptations, and biggest doubts. To have a brother or sister in Christ meeting with them makes a marked difference...When you follow-up with new believers, they are less concerned with how much you know and more concerned with how much you care.  
(Evantell.org)

Do you know someone who is a new Christian? She needs you! Offer to meet with her for a few weeks (6-8) to help her get established in her faith walk. If she says, “Yes,” then choose a grace-oriented basic guide for new believers or new-to-the-Bible Christians to work through together. Make sure she has a good Bible. Let her ask you questions. Depend on Jesus’ power and leading to help you do it.

20. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** The best test of whether you have really learned anything or not is by explaining what you have learned to someone else. Review the definition of forgiveness in the *Focus on the Meaning* above. Then, write how you would explain forgiveness to someone who may not understand it but needs to know the complete forgiveness she has in Christ. Think in terms of someone from a particular age group or stage of life. For example, how would you explain “forgiveness” to a Christian woman who has had an abortion in her past and is feeling awful about it? Or, consider someone you know who is wrestling with guilt over her part in a broken relationship. Explain forgiveness to her.

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast [“Immoral Woman: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Forgiveness”](#) after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the following listener guide.

## Immoral Woman: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Forgiveness

We need a Savior who does for us what we cannot do for ourselves—forgiveness.

### What is sin?

- Sin is any violation of the moral character of God or the law of God. We sin by thinking evil, speaking evil, acting evil or omitting good. Whether we like this description or not, sin is a rebellion in our hearts against God as our authority.
- Sin is like an incurable disease that always results in death and separation from God. Our sin separates us from having a relationship with God because He is a holy God. That means He is completely separated from anything that is sinful or evil.
- God hates sin. It pollutes His creation. Because God is holy, He takes action to destroy sin. The Bible calls that “God’s wrath.” He directs his anger against sin to wipe it out. But God’s love for people and His mercy towards us led Him to prescribe a substitute to take the punishment for human sin and restore spiritual life.
- Jesus Christ paid the death penalty for, making it possible for us to receive God’s forgiveness.

### What is forgiveness?

- In the Bible, the term “forgiveness” means “to send off or send away.” Sin is transferred to a substitute and taken away.
- God promised that one day forgiveness would be complete and permanent. That happened on the cross through Jesus.
- Once you place your faith in Jesus Christ, whatever you have done that was wrong in God’s eyes from the time you were born through the time of your death has been canceled. *Colossians 2:13-14*
- Since your sins have been taken away, God is longer counting them against you. 2 *Corinthians 5:19*

### The biblical process for dealing with recognized sin

*Step One: View yourself rightly.*

- Your **identity** is not coveter, greedy, gossiper, whatever that sin is. You are in Christ, a child of God, who sometimes covets, is greedy, gossips or whatever.

*Step Two: Recognize (confess) the truth regarding your sin.*

- To **confess** biblically means *to agree with God about what you and He both know to be true*. Confession is not a formula or a process. It is not dependent on a mediator. It is not just saying, “I am sorry.” It is saying, “I agree with you, God. I blew it!” You see your sin as something awful!

*Step Three: Confession is incomplete without repentance.*

- **Repentance** means *to change your mind about that sin, to turn away from it and to mourn its ugliness*. This results in changing your actions. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7 that godly sorrow brings repentance. It’s saying, “I recognize what I am doing is wrong. This fills me with sorrow because it hurts You, God. Please help me to live differently.” That is how our lives get transformed.
- Repentance requires that you change something. Confession alone is not sufficient. Jesus called for people to “repent” not to just “confess.”

*Step Four: Repentance leads to dependence.*

- **Depend** on the living Christ inside you for that change to take place. Our Lord Jesus Christ is not interested in our compliance or outward conformity as much as He desires our **obedience from the heart**. Dependence on God leads to obedience to God.

The complete and continual forgiveness we receive by faith in Jesus satisfies our thirst for love and acceptance. This forgiveness is what motivates us to live a life that pleases God.

*Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the goodness of His love. Then, live out that love.*

See the “Biblical Process for Handling Recognized Sin” bookmark in the Resources Section (page 143). Snap a picture of it or make a copy to use as you walk through the biblical process for dealing with sin in your life or someone else’s life.

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*Outcast Women—Identified by Lifestyle*

## Lesson 3: An Adulterous Woman

Time: Jesus' Third Year of Ministry, ~32 AD

### Day One Study

#### **Religious "Leaders" in Jesus' Time**

Although Jesus gained popularity among the masses during His second year of ministry, the disdain of the religious leaders steadily increased during that time. The Jews who desired to kill Jesus were the scribes, Pharisees, chief priests and the Sadducees, many of whom were part of the Sanhedrin, the highest legal and administrative body in the Jewish state in Roman times. (See "Israel's Political & Religious Leaders" chart in the "Introduction.")

- The **Pharisees** were described in Lesson 2 Day One Study.
- The **scribes**, also called lawyers or teachers of the Law, were an upper-class group of learned Jews who thoroughly knew and, therefore, interpreted the Mosaic Law. Many of *affluent academics* taught in the local seminary in Jerusalem. According to the tradition of the scribes, there were "secrets" of interpretation that they did not share with the common people thinking that God intended to leave the mass of people ignorant of His reasons for requiring certain things under the Law. Therefore, they had a wrong concept of God and themselves.
- The **Sadducees** came from the leading families of Israel (e.g., the priests, merchants and aristocrats). The high priests and most powerful members of the priesthood were mainly Sadducees. The Sadducees rejected the tradition of the elders and did not believe in the supernatural. They were willing to compromise with the political leaders of the country and tended to be more upper class as *comfortable compromisers*. It has been estimated that in Jerusalem alone there were more than 20,000 associated with the Sadducees. Pharisees, by contrast, were middle class and more religious than the Sadducees.
- The **Chief Priests** usually came from the class of Sadducees. This group included all the temple officers, including the High Priest and the captain of the temple.

Representatives from all these groups sat on the **Sanhedrin**, a religious governing body of 71 Jewish elders. They were elected, and then ordained by the laying on of hands. Their responsibilities included governing the Jewish community.

Read John 7:1-53. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

1. **Discover the Facts:** "The Jews" generally refers to the religious leaders not the Jewish crowd.

What did Jesus know (v. 1)?

What did his brothers think about Him (vv. 2-5)?

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Jesus went to the festival privately. What did He do and when (v. 14)?

What did the Jews who heard Him think about Him (v. 15)?

Jesus challenged their thinking then asked what questions of them (v. 19)?

He challenged their thinking again then declared what in v. 24?

Why could they not seize Him (v. 30)? See also vv. 6-8.

How did many in the crowd respond (v. 31)?

**Scriptural Insight:** What was the purpose of miracles? Besides alleviating suffering, God used miracles to authenticate the message and the messenger. See Acts 2:22.

On the last day of the festival, Jesus did what (vv. 37-39)?

What counsel did Nicodemus give to the chief priests and Pharisees (vv. 50-51)?

2. What effect did the hostility of these leaders have on Jesus in His teaching or actions?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. The religious leaders failed at giving hope to those who needed hope. They lost sight of a true “love for God” that would also include a love for people—all people. Read Matthew 22:34-40. What motivated Jesus to continue building relationships with and teaching those who needed to know Him regardless of the resistance?



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7. What trap did the religious leaders think they were placing around Jesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  8. Which one person is conspicuously absent? See Leviticus 20:10.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  9. The religious leaders asked a question “Now what do you say?” How did Jesus respond to their question?

**Scriptural Insight:** Many have tried to guess what Jesus wrote on the ground. Some suggest He wrote the sins of the accusers. Others propose that He wrote the words of Exodus 23:1, “Do not [be] a malicious witness.” Still others say He simply traced His finger in the dust while preparing to respond. His words spoken to the crowd are what really count. (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 347)

10. What did those who heard Jesus’ words recognize about themselves?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. **Live Out His Love:** Read 2 Corinthians 5:21. Jesus as the one without sin was the only person who could have cast the first stone. Remember how much Jesus has forgiven you. All of our debt before God is enormous. We are incapable of overcoming it on our own. We don’t just need a teacher but a Savior who comes in and does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Why should we look at people with a sense of equality in our **need** for God’s mercy? Why should we have compassion on nonbelievers who have not experienced God’s grace?

## Day Three Study

Read John 8:1-11. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

12. Remember the woman. What might have been going through her mind as she was standing there before Jesus and the crowd?

13. Put yourself in her shoes. What kept her there standing before Him even after her accusers left (v. 9)?

14. What does Jesus say to her (vv. 10-11)?

15. What qualities does Jesus display toward the woman and toward her behavior?

16. Why did Jesus choose to forgive her instead of condemn her though He recognized her guilt?

See the following verses:

- John 3:16-17—

- Luke 5:31-32—

- Luke 19:10—

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17. **Live Out His Love:** Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8. The Bible clearly teaches that immorality is not pleasing to God. We are instructed to "flee/avoid immorality." Are you currently in immoral behavior—an affair, pornography, living with someone who is not your husband? What choices do you need to make in order to flee from immorality or "leave your life of sin"? Are you confident that your heavenly Father has given you everything you need in order to do this? Ask your group to pray for you and give you help as needed to start a new way of life.

For additional application, read the "Greener-Grass Syndrome: Healing from Adultery" on page 144 in the Resources Section.

### Day Four Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

18. Read the following verses. What caution does the Bible give us concerning judging others?

- Matthew 7:1-5—
- John 7:24—
- Galatians 6:1—

19. After Jesus forgave her,

- What are His instructions to her?
- What choices must she make?

20. Read Hebrews 4:14-16.

- What is promised to us?
  
- Does that help include leaving “your life of sin?” Explain your answer.

21. **Pray & Love:** The snapshots in the gospels of the three women we have studied in the first 3 lessons clearly illustrate the distinction that Jesus makes between the sin and the sinner. He dealt with the sin in their lives while showing His love and concern for the women. In our study, we have contrasted His attitude toward the women with that of the Pharisees and other "religious" leaders.

- Do you have a hard time making this distinction when dealing with immoral friends or family members?
  
- For what can you specifically ask Jesus to give to you that would help you to love them with Jesus' love?

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast “[Adulterous Woman: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Victory](#)” after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the following listener guide.

## Adulterous Woman: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Victory

In Jesus Christ, you can have victory over any sin.

Sin is ugly in God's eyes. But praise God that through faith in Jesus Christ, you can have victory over any sin. The Bible calls sin a "work of the flesh."

### What is the flesh?

- The flesh is the human being in rebellion against God, coming from that part of the personality where sin dwells. Some translations use the phrase "sinful nature" to describe the flesh.
- The flesh does not refer to our physical bodies. God created this marvelous human body for us. The body is not evil in itself. But sin which indwells our humanity—**that** is the enemy.
- The flesh works by sending messages to the mind that are in conflict with the Spirit. We know it is there. The work of the flesh is **obvious**. And it is ugly. When living by the flesh, you will not look like a child of God.
- The flesh is a pretty powerful force. Its driving force is Self. **Self-effort, self-sufficiency, self-belief, and self-dependence**. And it is at war with the Spirit of God within us.

### Why does the flesh still assault us?

- When we trust in Christ as our Savior, we get forgiveness for our sin plus lots of other wonderful treasures. We also get new life as the Holy Spirit comes to live inside our once-dead spirits to make us spiritually alive.
- Our human spirit communicates with the Holy Spirit. We have direct access to God who is our father. We are made into a new creation—spiritually. For believers, this is done in the past when we first believed. And when Jesus returns or we go to heaven to be with him, we will get new bodies without that sin DNA. The flesh will be gone!
- Until that time when we get new bodies, we live in an overlapping age. We possess the life of the new creation through the Holy Spirit in us while still living in bodies of the old, fallen creation in a fallen, evil world. At the moment of salvation, we are born again of the Spirit. Our bodies are **not** born again. And our souls—that is, the mind, emotions, and will, those are **not** instantly transformed.

### We need to know this enemy to have victory over it.

The New Testament teaches us some truths about the flesh we must know to have victory over it.

- **Truth #1:** The desires of the flesh will not go away. We have the choice to gratify them or not gratify them.
- **Truth #2:** The flesh does not improve over time. It does not become “godly” over time.
- **Truth #3:** The flesh will not leave us alone to be spiritual. In fact, Romans chapter 6 describes the flesh as a slave master that keeps calling our names to make us obey it.
- **Truth #4:** The flesh wants control. There will be continual conflict. Romans chapter 7 describes the persistent nature of the flesh to concentrate on self. This is the universal experience of people who sincerely try to live a good life. Even after you are saved, you can never be good on our own.
- **Truth #5:** The flesh does not become less able to be tempted over time. Whether or not we are presently tempted in a given area, we are capable of committing any sin mentioned in the New Testament, given the right set of circumstances, time and temptation.
- **Truth #6:** The flesh uses a consistent pattern. It sends a thought to your mind leading to familiarity with that thought. Continued pondering leads to a loss of repugnance and, eventually, leads to curiosity. That leads to a desire to experiment with an activity. Having tried the activity, the flesh can learn to like it and grow dependent on any sensual stimulus.

### Victory comes through dependence on the Spirit of God.

- “Living by the Spirit” or “walking by the Spirit” is dependence on the Spirit of God to empower you to say no to the flesh and say yes to obedience to God. The blood of Jesus paid your freedom price so you no longer have to obey the flesh. The Bible calls that redemption.
- When God redeemed you, you became the possession of a loving, merciful God. And you can live in the security of your freedom from bondage to the flesh. Here is the best part. You have a new master with greater power than the flesh living inside of you now—the Spirit of God himself. He can give you freedom from any entrapping sin. We are not left helpless like a pawn in the midst of the conflict. We have God’s empowering presence in us. He is able to give you and me victory in our battle over sin.

*For the grace of God ... teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ (TITUS 2:11-14)*

*So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desire of the flesh.  
(GALATIANS 5:16)*

Legalistic rules do not work. As long as we live in these unredeemed bodies, sin remains a source of temptation in us. We must make the choice every single day whether to gratify the desires of the flesh or choose to live by the Spirit. To live by the Spirit is living in dependence on the Spirit to help you follow through with that choice.

*Here is the bottom-line:* We never outgrow our need to depend 100% upon Jesus Christ.

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Recognizing this should lead us to **have compassion on one another** and to **not take risks with sinful behavior!**

Seek to depend on Christ more in your life than on yourself. Admit your weaknesses and trust him to work there. Ask the Lord to protect you from yourself. In real life, I am trusting Christ with some aspects of my life while living in self-sufficiency in other areas of my life. You do that, too. As we learn more, we trust Him with more of our daily lives.

It's okay to say, "Lord, I can't do this on my own. But you can do this in me and through me." Then, watch what he does!

We have this conflict within until we die. But we have God Himself within us to give us the victory over the flesh.

The victory over the flesh that we receive by faith in Jesus satisfies our thirst for love and acceptance. A satisfied heart seeks victory over the desires of the flesh, knowing that they are in conflict with God's goodness in your life.

*Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the goodness of His love. Then, live out that love.*

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*Hurting Women—Identified by Pain*

## Lesson 4: A Sick Woman & A Dead Girl

Time: Jesus' Second Year of Ministry

### Day One Study

#### ***The Extraordinary Message of Jesus***

Jesus had been teaching God's Word to large crowds in the area around Capernaum, healing many people. Then, He and His disciples got into a boat and headed to the east side of the lake (Mark 4:35-41). A windstorm literally came down from the surrounding mountains through the Jordan River gorge upon the Sea of Galilee, which is 680 feet below sea level, and shook the boat like a tempest. This type of storm was, and still is, a common occurrence. Jesus demonstrated His power over nature by rebuking the wind and waves then admonished the disciples for their lack of faith. After healing a demon-possessed man, the whole group crossed back to the west side of the lake. There, Jesus encountered a woman and a girl in desperate need.

Women were not highly respected in Jesus' day. In fact, they were held responsible for the lustful temptations that men suffered. A Jewish rabbi would not talk to his wife or daughter in public. There was even a group of them called the "Bruised and Bleeding Pharisees" because they would rather cover their eyes than look upon a woman in public. As a consequence, they would bump into walls and houses. Notice the transfer—because women were the greatest source of their own personal sin (lust), the woman becomes evil. Rather than face the sin in their own hearts, they make women the scapegoat. That contributed, of course, to the cultural position of women.

Hopefully in our study so far, you have seen how absolutely different the Lord Jesus Christ was from His culture in the way He regarded women! As Jesus' ministry unfolded, the average citizen of Israel began to witness an extraordinary approach to women, one that cut against the grain of commonly held practices. Jesus treated women as no man had ever treated them before. His warmth, personal attention, tenderness, sound teaching, and compassion toward women were revolutionary.

Read Mark 5:1-21. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

1. This passage sets the stage for Jesus' encounter with the people in this lesson. From Mark 5:1-21...

- Who was relieved of his suffering?
- What was his response?
- What did Jesus tell him to do?
- What did the healed man do?
- What was the result?
- Why would a large crowd gather around Jesus as described in v. 21?

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**Think About It:** A huge crowd of people welcomes Jesus. They were expecting Him. They are pressing around Him, crushing Him so that He could hardly move or breathe because of the jam. Driven from the Decapolis (Mark 5:17), He is welcomed in Galilee. They can hardly wait to see what He would do next.

***Focusing on the Woman***

2. Read Mark 5:21-34 and Luke 8:42-48. Describe the woman and her circumstances.

**Historical Insight:** Her condition, though unknown, is probably uterine hemorrhaging like a number of women experience with endometriosis or fibroid tumors. The medical treatments available for her condition were limited although the Talmud (a book of Jewish history and rules) claims that physicians had at least 11 remedies. Some of the ones documented were: 1) carrying ashes of ostrich eggs on your body and 2) taking ground-up willow bark—a bitter-tasting remedy containing salicin, an aspirin-like drug, that would have only aggravated her bleeding. She must have been a woman of some means—at least she possessed enough financial resources to continue to seek out one doctor after another.

3. Consider what kind of life this woman had led for 12 years. How would this ailment have affected her family life, social life, and worship opportunities? See Leviticus 15:19-33 for clues. Considering what you as a woman enjoy in life, what did she not get to do?
- Family life—
  - Social life—
  - Worship life—

**Scriptural Insight:** The consequences of being “unclean” until evening or for several days were that you were excluded from the temple area (and synagogue seating), excluded from mingling with others, and considered separated from God. An unnatural discharge was treated like an illness, requiring an offering upon recovery.

4. **Pray & Love:** Do you know a woman who is desperately ill? How can you reach out to her with compassion to meet her felt needs and encourage a relationship with Jesus? Consider these questions to determine the best ways to do this.

What are her felt needs? Does she feel isolated or alienated because of her condition? Does her illness have a social stigma attached to it so that she is not comfortable in public? Does she have a relationship with Jesus yet?

## Day Two Study

Read Mark 5:24-34. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

5. What brought the sick woman **to Jesus** for healing?

**Think About It:** “She heard about Jesus.” It is our job to tell others about how Jesus can change lives. How can others hear without a proclaimer (good news teller)? No one knows how many times it takes for someone to finally pay attention and respond. Our role is to tell.

6. Put yourself in her shoes. As an ordinary woman, what emotions would she have experienced...

- As she reached out to touch Jesus’ cloak?
  
- After she felt healing?

**Scriptural Insight:** The unusual expression, “Jesus realized that power had gone out from Him,” has been understood in two ways. “One view maintains that God the Father healed the woman, and Jesus was not aware of it till afterward. The other view is that Jesus Himself, wishing to honor the woman’s faith, willingly extended His healing power to her. The latter view is more consistent with Jesus’ healing ministry. Power did not leave Him without His knowledge and will. However, He exercised it only at the Father’s bidding. The touch of the garment had no magical effect.” (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 125.)

7. How did Jesus respond to the woman after He knew she touched Him and was healed?

**From the Greek:** The Greek for “healed” actually means ‘save.’ Here both physical healing (‘be freed from your suffering’) and spiritual salvation (‘go in peace’) are meant. The two are often seen together in Mark’s Gospel (Mark 2:1-12; 3:1-6). (*NIV Study Bible* note on Mark 5:34, p. 1503)

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8. Why do you think He insists upon her revealing herself? What would be the advantage to her?

**Think About It:** Now she could enter society because she is healed AND she receives spiritual life as well. God always does more than we ask or think.

9. Discuss her response to Jesus seeking her out, including why she trembled with fear.

10. **Live Out His Love:** Jesus gave this suffering woman an opportunity to give her testimony publicly. Everyone hears her tell *why* she touched Him and *how* she had been instantly healed. Others now hear. Her pain caused her to seek help from Jesus by faith.

Describe any of your own painful circumstances that have driven you to Christ. What did you learn about His faithfulness through that experience? How did others minister to you in love, showing Christ to you? This is part of your faith story that you can share with another woman.

## Day Three Study

### ***Focusing on the Girl (and Her Family)***

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

11. Read Mark 5:21-23 and Luke 8:40-42. Describe the scene.

**Historical Insight:** A ruler of the synagogue was a layman whose responsibilities were administrative and included such things as looking after the building (maintenance, repairs, and cleaning) as well as supervising the worship (conducting services, selecting participants, and maintaining order). Though there were exceptions, most synagogues had only one ruler. Sometimes the title was honorary with no administrative responsibilities assigned. In any case, he was considered an elder so he sat in the reserved seats.

12. Consider Jairus' position in the community as ruler of the synagogue. Contrast his apparent view of Jesus with that of the Pharisees and other religious leaders we have studied so far. Why the difference?

Get the picture...A man pushes his way through the crowd, falls at Jesus' feet and pleads earnestly with Him to come and lay hands on his daughter. He was prominent and wealthy. But he had a problem that neither his prominence nor his wealth could solve.

Jairus obviously loves his daughter even though sons were considered more valuable, and he is very specific in what He wants Jesus to do. "Come and touch her." The Jews believed that the touch transmitted vitality. Jairus had faith in Jesus' touch, and he expressed that faith. Jesus acts upon the faith we have which is wonderful and encouraging to us. But would Jesus take time out to go to Jairus' house for a little girl? Was a little girl of any value in His eyes? Jesus goes with him. To Him, this little girl is just as important as anyone else. He starts off with the crowd following Him. But in this crowd, a woman has a desperate need. And Jairus had to wait for Jesus to meet her need first.

13. Read Mark 5:35-43 and Luke 8:49-56. What has occurred at Jairus' house?

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14. Discuss Jesus' words...

- To Jairus (Mark 5:36; Luke 8:50)—
  
- To the wailing crowd outside Jairus' house—

**Historical Insight:** As was customary, paid mourners were already at work weeping, wailing, singing, playing flutes, and clapping their hands (cf. Jer. 9:17; Amos 5:16).<sup>2</sup> The Mishnah specified that even the poorest husband had to hire at least two flute players and one female to wail when his wife died. Evidently the little girl's death was so expected that mourners were ready the moment she died. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on Mark 2022 Edition*, page 126)

15. Why did the wailers laugh at Jesus?

16. Who went into the room with Jesus?

17. Once inside, what did Jesus do for the girl AND her mom and dad? Notice His tenderness toward the girl through His words and gestures.

**Scriptural Insight:** In every instance of Jesus raising the dead in the Gospels, He addressed the dead person directly (cf. Luke 7:14; John 11:43). (*Dr. Constable's Notes on Mark 2022 Edition*, page 127)

18. Discuss why Jesus might have instructed the girl's parents to tell no one what had happened.

19. How is Jairus' initial faith challenged and stretched through this whole incident?

20. **Live Out His Love:** From Jairus' viewpoint, he had to wait an agonizingly long time for Jesus to respond to his request through delays, diversions, and disappointing news. Look carefully again at Mark 5:36. Write Jesus' words to him in the space below.

- What was Jesus' plan all along? Had He forgotten Jairus?
- Memorize this verse. What comfort does it give to you? Dependent living is learning to say to Jesus, "Lord, I can't do this on my own. But you can in and through me. I will trust you." Then, see what He does.

### Day Four Study

Read Mark 5:21-43. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

21. Considering Jesus' manner towards both the older woman and the girl (soon-to-be woman), in what ways did Jesus show that He thought of both of them as worthwhile individuals?

**Think About It:** We see how Jesus took time out from His busy schedule to minister to two women personally. One was socially dead; the other was physically dead. One touched Him and was healed without a word; the other He touched and spoke to when she was healed. One was an outcast; the other was loved within her family circle. One had no friend; the other had a father fearfully concerned for his daughter's life. Both were unclean, beyond human help, and without hope but were healed instantly and completely, receiving new life. Jesus demonstrated the value He places on every person—radically different from His day. He took time out from his busy schedule to minister to two women personally. God's love knows no partiality. (Vickie Kraft's teaching on this passage, Bible.org lesson-6-jesus-heals-two-women)

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## 22. *Live Out His Love:*

- When you petition the Lord, do you have faith in Him that He has heard and will answer? Are you willing to wait? For encouragement, read 1 John 5:14-15.
  
- Are you willing to accept "No" for an answer? Provide an example of an experience where God did not respond as you expected. How did you react? What was the ultimate outcome? What did you learn about God? Write this out in the space below as though you were telling it to someone. This is part of your faith story. Ask God to give you an opportunity this week to share this part of your faith story with someone else who is having a difficult time waiting for God or accepting His "No" answer.

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**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast "[Two Sick Women: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Hope](#)" after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the following listener guide.

## Two Sick Women: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Hope

Jesus is a personal God who brings hope.

### What is hope?

The kind of hope that the world offers is generally the wishful thinking kind where someone is not sure they will get what they want or need but “hopes” they will.

Biblical hope is the confident expectation that God will fulfill His promises to you because it is based on the character and faithfulness of God.

You need hope when you are facing something tough, when you are sad, or when you cannot see the end of a painful time. Losing hope leads to discouragement and despair. Hope is essential to human life.

### Hope through healing

*“Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases.” (Psalm 103:2)*

#### **Why did Jesus perform so many miracles?**

- Miracles authenticate the message and the messenger. Jesus’ miracles demonstrated that He is God and that His message has authority. You have to admit that the miracles certainly drew people to listen to Jesus’ message. Nearly every time miracles are mentioned in the gospels, Jesus was teaching the people truth about God.
- Miracles also demonstrate God’s compassion for His people. Through His miracles, Jesus showed that ...
  - He has power beyond that of an ordinary man. The laws of the natural world, which He created, were not boundaries for Him.
  - He was the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the Messiah. The Messiah would be recognized by the works He would do—healing the blind, freeing prisoners, and releasing the oppressed. Jesus basically said to people “I am that one.”
  - He was God on earth. In John 6:25, Jesus calls miracles “signs,” pointing to the fact that He was the Messiah—God on Earth.

#### **How does God still heal today?**

- Miracles still authenticate the message and the messenger. For someone claiming to do miraculous things, always make sure their message exalts Jesus as the **only** way to God, that the Bible is their **only** authority, and that forgiveness of sins is found **only** through Jesus Christ. Then, you can be confident that you are seeing the genuine works of God.
- God’s greatest miracle is changing a human heart from the inside out, redeeming a lost life. He is doing that in abundance.

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- God enables the human body to heal itself. We do not understand why treatments work on some people but not on others. But we must trust God's goodness in what He chooses to do.

## Hope through comfort when healing is delayed

- Jesus comforts us in ALL our troubles. That includes those that just seem to happen to us like chronic illness or pain as well as those we cause because of wrong choices we make. *2 Corinthians 1:3*
- God's answer to Paul about healing was, "No." So Paul said, "I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me." That frees us and moves us in the direction that will give us hope. *2 Corinthians 12:9-10*
- Through any life challenge, including physical debilitation, God wants us to learn to depend on God and His great power and not to depend on ourselves. He wants us to put our hope in Him and count on His work to deliver us when we are in the midst of troubles.
- Human parents raise their children to be less dependent on them and more independent. But God raises His children to be less independent and more dependent on Him. Whatever He brings into our lives that makes us more dependent upon Him is good for us
- You may feel that God is not noticing your pain. He knows. He chooses what will make you more like the Lord Jesus Christ. And suffering is an important instrument in His hands much as you may hate it.

In your pain, you can say to Him, *"I am your daughter, Lord. Help me to deal with this situation. Please give me your hope and comfort."*

Remember that God is good all the time. You can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do in your life. Trouble is part of human life. Christians who are loved by God will suffer some troubles in this world, but **Jesus is Your comforter** when you hurt.

Jesus Christ satisfies our thirst for hope and comfort when we need it. A satisfied heart receives hope and comfort to go through whatever seems to be insurmountable odds.

*Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the goodness of His love. Then, live out that love.*

*Hurting Women—Identified by Pain*

## Lesson 5: A Canaanite & a Crippled Woman

Time: Jesus' Third Year of Ministry

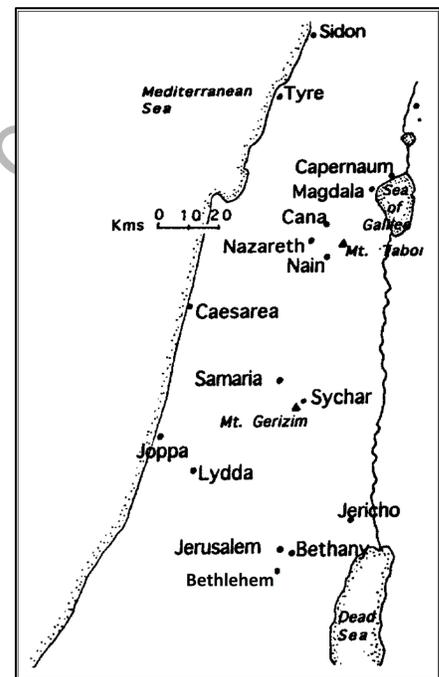
### Day One Study

#### Setting the Stage

During the third year of Jesus' ministry, the "Year of Opposition," Jesus fed five thousand plus, walked on water, calmed the storm, healed many who were brought to him and taught some Pharisees and teachers of the law the difference between clean and unclean. He then withdrew about fifty miles to the region of Tyre (some later manuscripts say "Tyre and Sidon") on the Mediterranean coast. (See the map.)

Tyre is an ancient seaport city of the Phoenicians north of Palestine consisting of a rocky coastal city and an island city. The Phoenicians were known for their trade and commerce and their skill as a seafaring people. Over time, Phoenicia was dominated by the Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Throughout history, friendly relations existed between the Hebrews and Tyrians. In fact, Jewish communities were scattered throughout the region. The home where Jesus stayed was probably Jewish. In the New Testament period, a Christian community flourished at Tyre so that Paul even stayed with the believers there at the end of his third missionary journey (Acts 21:1-7).

While in the region of Tyre, Jesus was approached by a non-Jewish woman from that vicinity. Matthew identifies her as a Canaanite, a descendant of the tribes conquered during Israel's conquest of Canaan (described in the book of Joshua). Mark adds that she was of Greek culture born in Syrian Phoenicia (the north part of Phoenicia near Syria).



Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

1. Read Mark 7:1-21. Discuss Jesus' teaching about what makes a person "clean" or "unclean."

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### **Getting to Know The Canaanite Woman**

2. Read Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30. What could be the reasons Jesus withdrew the 30 miles to the region of Tyre and did not want anyone to know it (Mark 7:24)?

3. Describe the Canaanite woman and her circumstances.

4. Read the following verses. Identify some of the evidences/symptoms of demon possession.

- Matthew 8:28; Mark 5:1-5—

- Matthew 12:22—

- Mark 9:17-18—

- Luke 13:11,16—

5. The Canaanite woman heard about Jesus, meaning someone told her.

- How did she get Jesus' attention...?

Matthew 15:22—

Mark 7:25—

- What does the woman falling at Jesus' feet tell you about her? See also Mark 5:22, 33.

6. What did the woman ask Jesus to do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Discuss the disciples' response to this woman and her need (Matthew 15:23).
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. **Live Out His Love:** We all want to get away from such interruptions by needy people at times. Our responses may be governed by our time schedule, biases, and even hard hearts. We cannot meet every need. But who can meet the spiritual needs of every person? Put yourself in the disciples' shoes, what could they have done instead of sending her away?

## Day Two Study

Read Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

9. What was Jesus' response to the woman's request?

**Scriptural Insight:** Jesus' answer to her in Matthew 15:24 and Mark 7:27 can be puzzling unless you understand the context. He had already taught people from Tyre and Sidon before in His ministry (Luke 6:17) and healed a Gentile's loved ones (Luke 7:1-10). In this case, Jesus was getting away with His "children" (the disciples) for them to "eat" (He would teach them), not to focus on this largely Gentile community. Gentiles were commonly called "dogs" by the Jews. He was basically telling her she would have to wait. Or could He have just been assessing her faith?

10. How did the woman respond to Jesus' statement?

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**From the Greek:** She took no offence at the implication of being a Gentile dog. Rather she with quick wit took Christ's very word for little dogs (*kunaria*) and deftly turned it to her own advantage, for the little dogs eat of the crumbs (*psiciwn*, little morsels) that fall from the table of their masters (*kuriwn*), the children. (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, on Matthew 15:27.

11. How does Jesus respond to her and meet her need?

12. What could the disciples have learned about ministry from this incident?

13. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Read Luke 18:1-8. Compare the Canaanite woman's persistence with the widow's persistence. From the points Jesus made at the end of the parable, what is God looking for in His children?

14. **Live Out His Love:** To *intercede* means to speak with someone in authority on behalf of someone else. This woman came to Jesus, an authority in her mind, and interceded for her daughter who was unable to come to Jesus on her own. Other examples of intercession are the four men who brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus in Mark 2:1-13. Both the Holy Spirit and Jesus Himself intercede for us in prayer (Romans 8:26, 34) when we are unable to do so. How persistent are you at interceding for those you love who may need your help and support? Share insights or examples of how best to intercede for them.

## Day Three Study

### *The Jewish Synagogue*

The practice among the Jewish people of Jesus' time was that the Jewish Synagogue building must be on a high point, the highest point in town, if possible. It should be near water, with the entrance to the east and the seats arranged so that the congregation faced Jerusalem when praying. For a town to have a synagogue, at least ten Jewish men must live there.

Synagogues were places of worship and education. Here the young were trained in Jewish life and language. Worshipers gathered on the Sabbath to pray and read the Scriptures. The most important piece of furniture was the shrine that held the Torah, the sacred roll or scroll on which parts of the Old Testament Scriptures were written. The bema, made of stone or wood, was an elevated platform next to the Torah shrine. Lessons and benedictions were given from this platform. Rows of stone benches surrounded the walls and provided seating for the people. The elders and rulers sat in an isolated section. Services included prescribed readings, prayer, and a sermon. Respected teachers who were visiting for the Sabbath were usually invited to speak.

### *Getting to Know The Crippled Woman*

Read Luke 13:1-17. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

15. Discuss Jesus' teaching on the correlation between one's "goodness" and suffering (vv. 1-9).

16. Describe the scene and the woman (vv. 10-17).

**Scriptural Insight:** Jesus identified the cause of her condition as being from a demon. Perhaps no one else knew that because she was not prevented from participating in synagogue worship. 17. Consider what kind of life this woman had led for 18 years. Put yourself in her shoes. How would this ailment possibly have affected her family life, social life, and worship life?

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18. How did Jesus heal this woman, and what was her response?

**Focus on the Meaning:** There is “symbolic value in Luke’s placing this miracle at this point in the narrative. It was Jesus’ mission among the people of the nation to loosen them from crippling influences and bring them to uprightness. Here was a graphic example of Jesus’ touch, bringing the woman to a position of uprightness.” (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 240)

19. Compare and contrast this Jewish woman with the Canaanite woman.

20. **Live Out His Love:** Do you catch yourself being hard-hearted towards those with a chronic illness (physical or mental), disabling injury, or long-term emotional problem? Maybe you are not hard-hearted, but you forget about them since their needs are not short-term. Ask the Lord to show you one person to whom you can show His kindness on a regular basis.

For additional application, read “Hannah’s Story: The ‘What For’ Quilt” in the Resources Section.

## Day Four Study

Read Luke 13:10-17. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

21. The healed woman expressed a proper response to being healed. Discuss the synagogue ruler's reaction to the healing. [To review the role of the synagogue ruler, look back to Lesson 4.]

**Scriptural Insight:** No one had spoken to him, but he felt his importance as the ruler of the synagogue and was indignant. His words have a ludicrous sound as if all the people had to do to get their crooked backs straightened out was to come around to his synagogue during the week. (A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, note on Luke 13:14)

22. How did Jesus answer the synagogue ruler? What message was Jesus conveying to the synagogue ruler and others in the crowd who thought like him?

23. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Jesus called the synagogue ruler a *hypocrite*. Define this term. What did it mean in Jesus' day? Find other places in the gospels where Jesus used this same term to get the attention of His listeners. In what ways were they being *hypocrites*?

24. What happened after Jesus spoke to them (v. 17)?

25. Considering Jesus' teaching in this passage, read Matthew 12:11-12; Mark 2:27-28, and John 5:16-17. What did Jesus consistently teach about Israel's Sabbath (seventh-day rest)?

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**Think About It:** The tendency of human beings is to put rules over relationships or rules over the needs of people (like the synagogue ruler did). Jesus showed the value of people over misguided rules, traditions, and practices. God was still being worshipped, even more so because of the miracle, and the people were still enjoying a day of rest from their usual employment.

26. **Pray & Love:** Jesus extended grace to both of the women in this lesson, actually three if you count the Canaanite woman's daughter who was healed. Grace is unmerited favor. It is a gift that is undeserved—by anyone! The disciples and the synagogue ruler were less interested in responding to the needs of the women with grace (knowing Jesus could heal the suffering) than they were in sending them away (one because she was an unclean Gentile; the other because she dared to let Jesus heal her on the Sabbath). Do you tend to put rules over relationships or the needs of people? In what areas of your life do you do this? Ask Jesus to reveal any hypocrisy in your heart and help you to extend grace rather than judgment to someone in need around you.

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast "[Two Women in Pain: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Kindness](#)" after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the following listener guide.

## Two Women in Pain: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Kindness

Kindness is Jesus Christ in you living His life through you.

We all want to get away from interruptions by needy people at times. Our responses may be governed by our time schedule, our biases, and even hard hearts. Honestly, we cannot meet every need. But we know the one who can meet the spiritual needs of every person. Jesus can. And we can show kindness to anyone Jesus puts in our path because He has already shown that kindness to us.

### Kindness is love's touch.

- Kindness is one aspect of love. It is love's touch. And it reflects God's love for us. God's kind of love is based on the deliberate choice of the one who loves rather than the worthiness of the one who receives love.
- God's kind of love is self-sacrificing, committed. It is unnatural. In fact, it wars against our selfish natures, doesn't it? But our God does not ask us to do anything that He does not provide the resources for us to do it. The love of Christ in us gives us a new ability we never really had before. It is His love in us.
- Love is kind. The root word translated "kind" means to be gracious and useful. A good working definition is "to keep on doing whatever is appropriate or suitable to meet someone's need ... and do no harm." *1 Corinthians 13:4*
- Kindness is an action, not a feeling. It is a gift that benefits the one who receives it. A person who is kind is helpful, friendly, generous, and warmhearted.
- God acts with kindness toward us. And in His kindness, He did something about our need for a relationship with Him. *Ephesians 4:32*

### What kindness says is important to the receiver.

Jesus modeled for the disciples and the religious leaders how to be kind to someone regardless of the person's status in society.

- Kindness says, "I am on your side. I care about you."
- Kindness says, "You are worth something."
- Kindness says, "God is kind and compassionate."
- Kindness says, "I notice you" to those who are feeling alone.

Consider what it is like for a newcomer to your small group or women's events.

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## **Kindness is the fruit of dependent living.**

- Kindness is Jesus Christ in you living His life through you. Kindness is part of his character.
- The Spirit produces this same kindness in you as you choose to be dependent on Jesus to do so. It is available to you 24/7. But you cannot do this through your own efforts. No human can be continually kind through self-effort.
- We get easily distracted by our own interests and business. You can ask the Lord Jesus to be kind to others through you. Then, watch what He does!

Jesus Christ satisfies your thirst for receiving His kindness and learning how to show kindness. A satisfied heart recognizes God's kindness and extends kindness to others, even those who may not deserve it.

*Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the goodness of His love. Then, live out that love.*

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*Hurting Women—Identified by Pain*

## Lesson 6: Widow of Nain

Time: Jesus' Second Year of Ministry

### Day One Study

#### **Setting the Stage**

Jesus was well into His ministry at this point. He called His disciples to Him (Luke 6:22) and proceeded to give the Sermon on the Mount—an amazing presentation of God's love and mercy. He then went to Capernaum, continued His ministry to the sick and suffering, and encountered an unusual Roman centurion who loved his servant and the Jewish people. Jesus was amazed at the soldier's understanding of God's authority over His people and healed the slave who was in the centurion's home.

After this miracle, Jesus and His disciples headed to a city called Nain, about 10 miles southeast of Jesus' hometown of Nazareth. The small town is reached from the west by traveling up a steep road with rock tombs on either side. The road leading from Capernaum to Nain, as Jesus traveled it, enters the town from the northeast past a small burial ground.

The birth of a son was an occasion of great celebration. In the Jewish culture, giving birth to a son gave a woman value in her husband's eyes. A baby boy ensured the hope of passing on the family wealth and name. His presence guaranteed social security. It would be his responsibility to care for his aging parents, and especially his mother once widowed. It was thus the hope of every Jewish woman to have a son.

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

1. Widows in Israel were considered to be under God's special care. They wore distinctive clothing (as in Genesis 38:14) so they were easily identified. Read the following verses and note how God intended to care for them through His people and warnings when Israel failed to protect these vulnerable women:
  - Deuteronomy 14:28-29—
  - Deuteronomy 24:19-21—
  - Psalm 68:4-5; 146:9—
  - Isaiah 1:23; 10:1-2—

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Two of Israel's Old Testament prophets (Elijah and Elisha) were known for performing miracles, especially for widows. In fact, Jesus was often compared to one or other of these prophets as He performed miracles during His ministry. So let us familiarize ourselves with what the people of Nain already knew.

2. Read the following verses. Describe what happened and how each woman responded.

- 1 Kings 17:7-16; The widow of Zarephath—

- 2 Kings 4:1-7; The prophet's widow—

3. God also used these two prophets to bring someone back from the dead. Read the following verses. Describe what happened and how each woman responded.

- 1 King 17:17-24; The Widow of Zarephath—

- 2 Kings 4:8-37; The Shunammite woman—

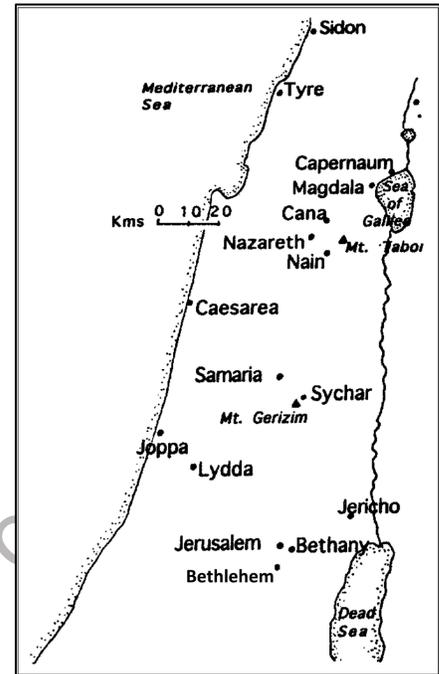
4. **Pray & Love:** Both of the prophets you studied were flexible in how they followed the Lord's leading. God interrupted their lives so they could minister to a woman. We, as women, often have our plans as to what we should do each day.

- Read James 4:13-15 and Proverbs 16:3, 9. What is the balance between making plans and following God's leading?
- How will you submit to the Lord your daily plans and be open to whatever opportunities He gives you to build a relationship with someone who needs to know Him or to know Him better?

## Day Two Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

5. Read Luke 7:11-15. Find Nain on the map. Nain is just over the ridge from Shunem (question 3). From the text of vv. 11-12, describe the scene. Note: Calling the son a “young man” generally places him younger than 30 years of age.



**Historical Insight:** Failing to honor the dead was perhaps the greatest lack of respect a Jew could display. Bystanders were obligated to follow a funeral procession, with hired mourners adding to the wails of friends. The body was wrapped in cloth and carried on a bier. After the funeral, mourning continued for 30 days. Paid mourners developed as a profession in Old Testament times but continued into the time of Jesus. As a career that passed from mother to daughter, professional mourners were almost always women. Their mourning was with dirges and eulogies, sometimes accompanied by flutes. Funerals were often held the same day as the death because of the heat and lack of embalming.

6. If you have experienced the pain of someone very close to you, you probably understand the widow's state of mind during the funeral procession. Put yourself in the woman's place, what could she have been feeling and thinking?
7. The loss of a son in the Jewish culture was a great tragedy. Read Mark 12:38-40. What did Jesus say about any help a widow might receive from the religious leaders?

**From the Greek:** The word translated “devour” (NIV) means to forcibly take, to strip someone of their goods. The NLT renders it as “shamelessly cheat widows out of their property.” Consider how widows, especially elderly ones, are still vulnerable today.

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8. Jesus was continually “people watching” and teaching His disciples about people. Read Mark 12:41-44. Knowing the plight of all widows, including this one, what did Jesus see in her heart that He wanted His disciples to grasp?
9. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Research the plight of widows in the Roman Empire during this time period. What affected their status? What were their options?
10. **Pray & Love:** The size of the crowd showed the real sympathy of the town for her. Christians often do not know what to say to someone who is grieving, or they say things that hurt more than help (for example, “You can have another child” or “She’s in a better place”). One of the nicest things someone wrote to me in a card after my father died several years ago was this, “Knowing you, I look forward to meeting your dad in heaven one day.” I cherish that card.
- If you have been in a place of grief, what did someone close to you say or do that helped you through it?
  - What did someone say or do that added to the pain?
  - Research online suggestions for what should be said/done or not be said/done to someone grieving in various situations.



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13. What happened next (vv. 14-15)?

- Verse 14—

- Verse 15—

14. **Live Out His Love:** Jesus' heart went out to this grieving widow. Isn't it comforting to know that when you are in pain, God's heart goes out to you? He feels your pain. He cares for you. He comforts you. He acts on your behalf. He is not a cold, distant, helpless Deity but is a loving, compassionate God. Jesus personally invites you to bring your deepest longings, heartaches, and anxieties to Him today, just as men and women did in the ancient past. Are you convinced that you can go to Him and openly express your deepest needs? If possible, share a situation in your life when you felt the compassion of Christ.

## Day Four Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

15. Read Luke 7:11-17 again. Jesus gave three gifts—life to the son, the son to the mother, and hope to both plus the town. Discuss the results of Jesus' miracle that day and in the days that followed.

- Verse 16—

- Verse 17—

16. Read Matthew 1:22-23 and Isaiah 35:3-6. How does their response relate to God's promise?

17. We are not told why Jesus went to Nain, but the timing of His approach with the funeral procession would seem to be a God-arranged “divine appointment.” Jesus’ encounter with the widow of Nain ended up touching many lives. List all the groups and/or persons who have been affected by this “divine appointment.”

**Scriptural Insight:** In the ministries of Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus, we see that they were directed by God toward helping specific women, raised dead boys who were only sons of the women, and acted out of compassion for the women. In all three incidents, the sons were given back to their mothers. All three women had a story of God’s compassion to tell to their neighbors. The Shunammite woman told her story to a king (2 Kings 8:1-6).

18. **Live Out His Love:** Jesus actively did what He had the power to do to alleviate this woman’s suffering. So, we should also do what we have the power to do to alleviate human suffering, even if it is just bringing a meal, visiting, calling, providing clothes, listening, giving counsel, or praying with them. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, we are referred to as “ambassadors” of Christ and of the Gospel. Share a time when you felt God sent you on a “divine appointment” to someone who needed you at that time. You may have the opportunity even today to encourage someone in your group!

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast “[Widow of Nain: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Compassion](#)” after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the following listener guide.

## Widow of Nain: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Compassion

Genuine compassion is a reflection of overflowing joy.

Jesus told His followers, “Don’t let your needs dominate your thoughts.” Your heavenly Father knows your needs. He cares for the creatures in the natural world so they lack nothing. He will care for you. Give yourself to the Lord first. Pursue God’s purposes more than your own purposes. Think differently about God’s provision for you.

### Think differently about God’s provision for you.

- In 2 Corinthians 8:2, Paul wrote to the Christians living in southern Greece, discussing the offering that had been collected by the Christians in northern Greece to help the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. This is what he said about them,

*Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. (2 Corinthians 8:2)*

- That is so radical! Extreme poverty giving generously with overflowing joy?! Those early Christians are an example to all believers of the dynamic difference that God’s grace can make in the mindset of His people when it comes to provision. Gratefully receiving and generously giving—both of those—come from the overflowing joy of knowing Jesus Christ and what He is doing in our lives. Whether you are the receiver or the giver, how you do both should be different than what the world does.
- Genuine compassion is a reflection of that overflowing joy.

### God’s riches to us are supplied through us to meet another’s needs.

#1. *Compassion is not feeling; it is doing.*

- Compassion is not just feeling empathy for someone who is hurting. It is doing something to ease her pain. Whether it is for this week or longer, compassion remembers that most times of need last longer than a day.
- In the Old Testament, God’s plan for the needy in Israel was that perfectly good food was *purposefully* left in the fields for the poor to have. It was proactive, thinking ahead. Compassion leads to considering the needy as you go about your daily work. Compassion is not feeling; it is doing.

#2. *Compassion requires trusting God, not having plenty.*

- This is totally opposite of the world’s thinking, isn’t it? If you think about it, there is a fine line between good stewardship and stinginess. We should be good stewards of the provisions God’s given today, for example, staying within a budget. But not trusting God as provider enough to share what we have can lead to stinginess.

"It is not what you would do with a million, if riches should ever be your lot. But what you are doing at present with the dollar and a quarter you've got." (R.G. LeTourneau)

- If you and I do not consider what He is already given us to be for kingdom purposes, it is not going to happen with more, is it?! Compassion requires trusting God, not having plenty.

*#3. Compassion gives off the top, not leftovers.*

- The usual procedure for helping the needy is to have your garage sale then call the local charity to pick up the leftovers. Sounds like you are doing a good work, but it is not in God's economy. That is worldly thinking. That is not overflowing joy welling up in rich generosity.
- What you give reveals your heart. Give good stuff, before having a garage sale, unless you are desperate for the money yourself. If possible, give your proceeds to the needy family. Throw out the stained and worn things from your donations. When you clean out your closets or change furniture, think about giving it to someone who cannot go shopping for those things. Give the best you have to give. Make it easy for her to use it.

*#4. Compassion is personal.*

- It is easy to write a check and send to some organization. That is a good thing to do. It is harder to deliberately and delightfully meet the specific needs of a person with a name and a face you know. We in America think that the government helps the needy. Or, church benevolence will take care of it. Yet, we lose the personal touch and blessing that comes from that **overflowing joy welling up in rich generosity** to a specific person.

*#5. Compassion is proactive about living without so you can give more.*

- Ask God to help you determine something you can live without for a period of time. Your choice. No one's looking. Take the money you would have spent on that and look for ways to give it.
- Isn't it comforting to know that when you are in pain, God's heart goes out to you? He feels your pain, comforts you, and acts on your behalf. He is not a cold, distant, helpless Deity but is a loving, compassionate God. Jesus personally invites you to bring your deepest longings, heartaches, and anxieties to Him today.

Jesus Christ satisfies our thirst for compassion when we need it. A satisfied heart senses God's favor and compassion.

*Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the goodness of His love. Then, live out that love.*

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*Devoted Women—Identified by Faithfulness*

## Lesson 7: Mary & Martha

Time: Jesus' Second and Third Year of Ministry

### Day One Study

#### **Setting the Stage**

After two years of ministering in Galilee, Jesus returned to Judea and Perea, territories near Jerusalem, to minister there. In Jerusalem, He healed a man by the Pool of Siloam and told a parable about Himself as the Good Shepherd who would give His life for His sheep. Somewhere in Judea, He answered the question, "Who is my neighbor?" with a parable about a good-hearted Samaritan who helped a fellow traveler. After that, He went to Bethany.

Bethany was a small village on the southeastern slopes of the Mount of Olives about two miles east of Jerusalem on the Jericho Road. It still exists today. Martha, Mary, Lazarus and "Simon the leper" lived there. The Mount of Olives, from which Jesus could see Jerusalem, is about 2 miles long and has three peaks. The modern road from Jericho to Jerusalem still passes along its southern slopes. Rising about 100 feet above Jerusalem, it gives an unforgettable view of the city, which is to the west. (For more information on *Hospitality in Jesus' time*, see page 19.)

Read Luke 10:38-42. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

#### 1. **Discover the Facts:**

- What was Martha's **initial** response upon seeing Jesus and His companions (v. 38)?
- Jesus accepted her invitation. Martha went to work on the preparations for hosting that size of a crowd. What became her sister **Mary's** focus during the preparations (v. 39)?
- What soon became **Martha's** focus, and what did she do (v. 40)?

**From the Greek:** The Greek word translated distracted in Luke 10:40 means "drawn around" as with anxiety, distracted in mind and in looks. Martha came to Jesus, literally "stepped up to and burst in or upon" Jesus.

- What did Jesus say in response to Martha's demanding outburst (vv. 41-42)?

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2. Toward whom was Martha's anger directed and why?
3. In Jesus' response to Martha, what was He trying to teach her? What was **His** focus?
4. **Live Out His Love:** We will discuss more about the differences between Mary and Martha later in this lesson. For now, let us focus on what Jesus was teaching Martha about neglecting the things distracting her from doing what is truly the most important. Read the following article and answer the question at the end.

**Planned Neglect Leaves Time for God!!** In her book, "A Practical Guide to Prayer," Dorothy Haskins tells about a noted concert violinist who was asked the secret of her mastery of the instrument. The woman answered the question with two words, "PLANNED NEGLECT." Then she explained, "There were many things that used to demand my time. When I went to my room after breakfast, I made my bed, straightened the room, dusted, and did whatever seemed necessary. When I finished my work, I turned to my violin practice. That system prevented me from accomplishing what I should on the violin. So I reversed things. I deliberately planned to neglect everything else until my practice period was complete. And that program of planned neglect is the secret of my success."

This same principle can be helpful as we plan our lives: quiet time with the Lord, time with our family, professional development, time with our spouse, a hobby. There are many good things we can choose to do with our day. Unless we discipline ourselves and make a deliberate effort, good things will keep us from those life concerns that are top priority. The tyranny of the urgent robs us of spending time with God in meditation and prayer, time with our spouse, our children and just time by ourselves. We squeeze these ultimate relationships into the "leftover" moments in our day, when we are rushed or exhausted.

In Ephesians 5:15-17, Paul calls on us to use our time wisely. "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is." Jesus urges us in the Sermon on the Mount to put God first. "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Matthew 6:33.

Take some time to look at your day. Ask yourself some questions, "What are the important things in my life? What one thing contributes more to the quality of my life than all the other concerns? What is my number one ability, and how am I developing it? Where does my husband/wife/children/friends/walk with God/recreation fit into my day?"

The "laser-lane" lifestyle of the [city] is full of the urgent. We need to reflect on our value system and determine what "PLANNED NEGLECT" we need to practice in order to keep the ultimate relationships in priority positions in our lives. (Mike Danchak, *Dallas Morning News*)

How can you do some "Planned Neglect" in your life to help you have a regular focused time on God?

## Day Two Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

5. Read John 11:1-16. Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was ill, yet they did not ask Him to come to Bethany though they probably expected it (John 11:21,32).
  - What is plainly stated in v. 5?
  - Knowing the need, what did Jesus decide to do (v. 6)?
6. Two days later, Jesus told the group that it was time to go to Bethany. What was His purpose for waiting two days before heading to Bethany (vv. 11, 14-15)?

**Historical Insight:** A burial cave could have been a natural cave or a tomb cut into the rock. A large round stone was often rolled across the entrance of such a tomb after burial. Upon death, the body was sealed inside the tomb. After the flesh had decayed and only the skeleton remained, the bones were placed in a small box called an ossuary, which was then placed on a shelf carved out of the tomb wall. In this way, a whole family could be buried in the same tomb.

Because of the warm climate in Palestine, burial usually took place the same day as death. But before the funeral, the body was prepared for burial. Rarely did the immediate family become involved in preparing the body for burial. Friends and other family members washed the body and clipped the hair and nails. Strips of linen were then wrapped around the body. Spices (hyssop, rose oil, aloe, and myrrh) were placed between these strips. Placing a linen napkin over the face, the body was laid on an open bier and carried to the tomb.

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7. Read John 11:17-37. Mary and Martha were both experiencing grief. How did each respond to Jesus being near?

- Martha (v. 20)—
  
- Mary (vv. 20, 28-29)—

Notice that both Martha and Mary declared the same thing to Jesus (v. 21 Martha; v. 32 Mary). Both express confidence in His power to heal. Both sisters already knew that Jesus had brought two people back from the dead (Mark 5; Luke 7). But neither of those had been laid in a tomb yet.

8. Looking at vv. 22-23,

- In her statement in v. 22, what was she hoping Jesus would do?
  
- Jesus understood what she meant. What did Jesus promise to her (v. 23)?

9. Look at the dialogue between them in John 11:24-27.

- What did Martha say that she knew to be true (v. 24)?
  
- What did Jesus declare to her (vv. 25-26)?
  
- How did Martha respond (v. 27)?
  
- Do Martha's answers reveal that she had also been listening to Jesus' teaching?

**Think About It:** Martha's confession of faith is similar to Peter's in Matthew 16:16. In fact, what Martha says is even more amazing because she makes her declaration with her brother dead now for four days, already in the grave! Her response to Jesus' question, "Do you believe this?" is a firm, "Yes, Lord." The emphasis in the Greek is that this is her firm and settled faith.

10. Review John 11:33-35.

- When Jesus saw Mary and the people surrounding her weeping, how did He respond?
- What does this reveal about Him?

**From the Greek:** The Greek word translated "deeply moved" (also "groaned" or "angry") "as used in the Gospels invariably describes an angry, outraged, and indignant attitude (cf. v. 38; Matt. 9:30; Mark 1:43; 14:5). These emotions mingled in Jesus' spirit as He contemplated the situation before Him. John also described Jesus as troubled, another strong verb that describes emotional turmoil ... Evidently as Jesus viewed the misery that death inflicts on humanity and the loved ones of those who die, He thought of its cause: sin. Many of the Jews present had come from Jerusalem, where Jesus had encountered stubborn unbelief." (*Dr. Constable's Notes on John 2022 Edition*, p. 313)

- What did Jesus plan to do to meet the sisters' needs and heal their hurts (vv. 4, 11, 23)?

11. Read John 11:38-45. Describe the scene as though you were there watching it. [It is okay to picture Jesus smiling as He greets Lazarus.]

12. Looking at vv. 39-40...

- What was Martha's objection?
- Jesus knew Martha pretty well by then. What was Jesus' response to her? See His promise in v. 23.

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13. Review Jesus' mission in this situation (John 11:4,11,15,23,40-42). In what ways did He accomplish His mission? See also v. 45.

14. **Live Out His Love:** From John 11:3,5 we can be confident that Jesus truly loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. They were confident in His **love** for them and in His **power** to heal. He could have healed Lazarus from a distance the moment He received the news as He had done many times before this (for example, Mark 7:24-30 and John 4:46-53). Yet, He did not. Instead, He allowed these friends whom He loved dearly to endure pain and suffering for several days because there was a greater **good** they could not see at the time. Jesus loved them and hurt right along with them. If you think that you are suffering because you have done something wrong to make God stop loving you—that is a lie! Erase it from the “auto-fill” workings of your mind. Replace it with these four truths you can count on:

- Jesus loves you.
- Jesus knows what is going on in your life.
- Jesus can do something about it.
- You can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do.

Now, handwrite these four truths somewhere to etch them in your mind. He may not bring back your dead loved one or heal your sickness or make everything right. His goodness will choose to do whatever is best for you, for others, and for God's glory. Are you okay with that?

## Day Three Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

**Think About It:** This is the first time someone who had been in the grave is brought back to life—a picture of what will soon happen to Jesus.

15. **Deeper Discoveries (Optional):** Read John 11:45-57 and 12:9-11. Not everyone was so pleased to hear about Lazarus being restored from the dead. Discuss what happens in these verses and how it affects Jesus' ministry (v. 54).

After the raising of Lazarus, Jesus made His departure. After a short stay in Ephraim (15 miles away), He returned to Bethany to stay for His last days (John 12:1). On Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem triumphantly, riding on a donkey. On Monday, He pronounced a curse on a barren fig tree and drove out the merchants and moneychangers from the temple. On Tuesday, He answered a question about paying taxes to Caesar and pointed out a widow giving her small coins in the temple. That evening, He taught His disciples on the Mount of Olives. Then He went to a dinner with His friends in Bethany, at the home of Simon the Leper who must have been healed so that his life had also been changed (Mark 14:3). Four people whose lives are undeniably touched and changed by Jesus gratefully honored Him.

The account of Mary's anointing of Jesus is found in 3 gospels. In Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:1-11, she is unnamed. John's account was written later. He not only includes her name in John 12:1-11, but he also clarifies her identity in John 11:2 since she had been unnamed in the other 2 gospel accounts. The context of all three is the same event. The anointing of Jesus by the sinful woman in Luke 7:36-51 (Lesson 2) is a different event earlier in Jesus' ministry as is seen in that passage.

16. Read Mark 14:1-11. Describe the scene.

17. Read John 12:1-11. What additional information do you get?

18. How did each of the sisters show their gratitude to Jesus for giving life back to their brother?

- Martha—
- Mary—

**Historical Insight:** Spikenard (nard) is a fragrant ointment made from a plant growing in northern India. It was expensive and was imported in sealed alabaster flasks that were opened only on special occasions. Mary anointed both Jesus' head (Matthew and Mark) and His feet (John). Why use her hair on His feet? In Judaism (and in other ancient cultures), hair was associated with a woman's glory, her self-worth, and respect (1 Corinthians 11:5-6). So, she placed her self-worth at His feet. Respectable women did not unbind their hair in public.

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19. What does Mary's "gift" indicate about her love for Jesus?

**Think About It:** Mary possibly perceived with her delicate woman's intuition what the apostles failed to understand though repeatedly and plainly told to them by Jesus—His impending execution. If not, Jesus gave that meaning to her actions.

20. Jesus accepted Mary's act of worship. The disciples rebuked her harshly (Mark 14:4-5), especially Judas (John 12:4-6) who was stealing from the group money bag. Read Mark 14:6-9 again. List all the ways that Jesus defended and honored her.

21. What do you think Jesus meant by saying in Mark 14:8, "she did what she could" (literally, "what she had she did")?

22. **Live Out His Love:** Jesus said that Mary did what she as a woman in her culture with her resources could do for Him. He called that "a beautiful thing to Me." As a woman in your life circumstances, in what ways could Jesus say, "she did what she could" about you when it comes to showing gratitude to Him? How does your heart show gratitude to Him? Feel free to respond in any creative means you choose to use—prose, poetry, song, art, prayer.

## Day Four Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Jesus and His disciples often stayed in Bethany when they were near Jerusalem (Matthew 21:17 and Mark 11:11,12), probably with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. They knew the joy of Jesus' private company and His love (John 11:3,5,11). Jesus needed friendship and enjoyed His relationship with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

**Think About It:** If the perfect Son of God needed friends, how much more do we need them!! Lazarus and Simon, both men healed by Jesus, gave a dinner in His honor at a time when the Pharisees were hunting Him like an animal. Jesus knew his friends' home was a place of welcome, protection, rest, and provision. Where do you go when you feel “hunted” by the world?

23. Christianity is Christ. It is all about a relationship with Him. How did the two sisters blossom in their relationship with Jesus over time?

- Martha—

- Mary—

24. **Live Out His Love:** Mary and Martha were created with different personalities and behavioral tendencies. Jesus understood that about them. He understands that about you as well, quirks and all. He knows how to lead you. Think about your tendencies to control a situation or not, how quickly you shed tears or not, how you speak before you think. He knows you well and still loves you dearly. He hurts when you hurt and rejoices when you rejoice. He knows how to respond to **your** needs, which will be personally applied and different from how He responds to your “sister’s” needs.

- Are you okay with that? Or are you still telling Him how He should do things, telling Him how He should be God?
- Read John 11:39-40. If Martha insisted on having her own way, what would she have missed? Apply Jesus’ answer to Martha to your own expectations from Him. How will you let Him lead you?

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25. **Live Out His Love:** Mary and Martha could serve Him, love Him, and worship Him in different ways—all equally as valuable. That is the same for us, too. Isn't that wonderful? We do not have to be alike to be able to love and serve Him. This is how it is in the Body of Christ. Have you been made to feel guilty for being more of a “doer” than a “feeler?” Look at Romans 12:6-8 for a list of some spiritual gifts. Some are “doer” gifts (teaching, leadership, administration); some are “feeler” gifts (mercy, helps). The Holy Spirit through Paul says that all are needed in the local church. Serve Him wholeheartedly without complaining.

26. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):**

- What spiritual gift(s) do you think the Holy Spirit has given to you? You can take an online assessment at [gifts.churchgrowth.org](http://gifts.churchgrowth.org) to help you find out.
  
- How are you using your gift to help others get to know Jesus or to grow in their faith if already Christians?

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast “[Mary & Martha: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Assurance of His Love](#)” after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the following listener guide.

## Mary & Martha: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Assurance of Love

You can count on this truth — God loves you.

### Jesus' love in action

- Jesus' love for Martha did not allow Martha to stay focused on the wrong things so He stopped her bad thinking and redirected her toward what was truly important.
- Jesus' love for Mary protected Mary from unwarranted accusation from her sister and from His own disciples.

### Love is not soft.

When their brother died, Jesus' love compelled Him to travel to be with them and to cry with them. His love promised them hope, then fulfilled that promise. Jesus, as fully God and fully man, truly loved them. But love does not always make it easy on the one loved. Jesus did not make it easy on Martha and Mary and Lazarus.

- Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus (John 11:3). That is plainly stated. They knew He loved them. All 3 of them.
- Jesus knew what was going on in their lives. Lazarus was deathly ill and soon died (vv. 6, 11, 14). And Jesus let it happen.
- Jesus could do something about it. Martha was confident in His **love** for them and in His **power** to heal. Jesus could have healed Lazarus from a distance the moment He received the news as He had done several times before this (for example, John 4:46-53). Yet, He did not.
- Jesus chose to do something different, even better than what anyone could imagine though it caused pain and suffering to those He loved and a lot of waiting, too (John 11:14-15). Instead, He allowed these friends whom He loved dearly to endure pain and suffering for several days because there was a greater **good** they could not see at the time. Jesus loved them and hurt right along with them.
- Martha could now say to herself with assurance, ***“Jesus loves me. Jesus knows what is going on in my life. Jesus can do something about it. I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do.”*** And so can you.

### Assurance of His love in your life

How confident are you that Jesus loves you? Do you need assurance that He loves you?

You are loved by your God. Love is good because God is good. And God's love for you is unending. I am convinced of this. God wants you to know this:

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*“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39)*

If you think that you are suffering because you have done something wrong to make God stop loving you—that is a lie! Erase it from the “auto-fill” workings of your mind. Replace it with these four truths you can count on:

- #1. Jesus loves you.
- #2. Jesus knows what is going on in your life.
- #3. Jesus can do something about it.
- #4. You can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do.

He may not bring back your dead loved one or heal your sickness or make everything right. But His goodness will choose to do whatever is best for you, for others, and for God’s glory.

Jesus satisfies our thirst for the assurance of His love. A satisfied heart can go forward with complete assurance that your God knows how to love you well!

*Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the goodness of His love. Then, live out that love.*

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*Devoted Women—Identified by Faithfulness*

## Lesson 8: Mary the Magdalene

Time: Time: Jesus' Third Year of Ministry

### Day One Study

#### Setting the Stage

As Christ continued His public ministry, more and more people began to travel with Him from one town to the next. Some were no doubt just curious onlookers. But others followed because they could not help but accompany the person who had so radically changed their lives. Mary, the Magdalene, was among the latter group. The name *Mary* is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Miriam*. Miriam was Moses' older sister and one of the leaders God gave to Israel (see Exodus 15:20-21; Micah 6:4). So, Mary was a popular girl's name in Israel.

Historians think that Magdala was a small village on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, southwest of Capernaum (see the map). It was also known by two other names—Magadan and Dalmanutha. Magdala was about three miles north of Tiberias where the ruler of Galilee, Herod Antipas, had his capital. Once famous for its fine woolens and dyed fabrics, Magdala had as many as 4,000 inhabitants with 80 weavers' shops and 300 shops that sold pigeons for sacrifices. The Hebrew name Magdala is associated with the word *migdol*, which meant "a watchtower." In Jesus' day, it was primarily a Gentile city, as its horse and chariot racetrack indicate. Two gospel writers record Jesus going there (Matthew 15:39-16:4; Mark 8:10-12).

### Day One Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

- List every reference to women in the following verses, including names and any information given about them (family associations, etc.).

Luke 8:1-3	Mark 15:40-41	Matthew 27:55-56	John 19:25

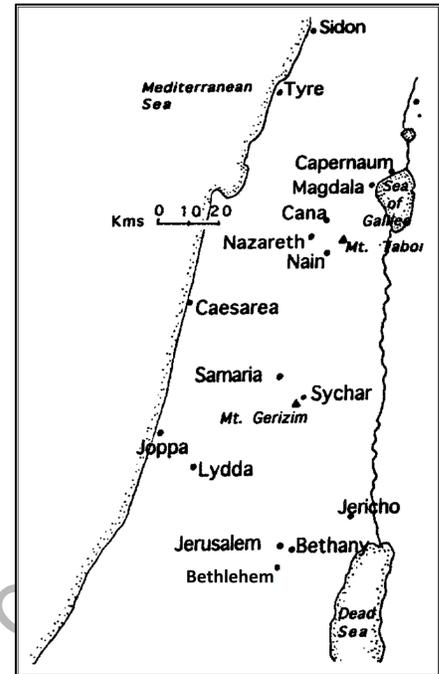
- Jesus did not use miracles to provide for His daily needs. For those who traveled with Jesus, list all that ministering to and providing for Him and His 12 disciples might have looked like for these women as they traveled throughout Galilee and the 70 miles to Jerusalem.



## Day Two Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

5. Locate Magdala on the map. Review Luke 8:2-3; Mark 15:40-41 and Matthew 27:55-56. What do you learn about Mary Magdalene and the choices she made?
  
6. From our study of the Canaanite woman's daughter in Lesson Five, what symptoms might Mary have displayed while being demon-possessed?



**Historical Insight:** There is no scriptural evidence that she had been immoral. A church leader in 591 AD associated Mary with the immoral woman in Luke 7:36-50, thus unfairly adding that stigma onto her character.

7. How might being a demon-possessed woman have affected her life socially, spiritually, and emotionally?
  
8. Read Mark 9:31 and Luke 24:6-8. What did Jesus tell His 12 disciples and the women to prepare them for the future?

Mary Magdalene experienced the events of the last week of Jesus' life—His triumphal entry, the cleansing of the Temple, verbal combat with the Pharisees, and the agony of His arrest and trial. During Jesus' crucifixion, His disciples deserted Him and fled (Matthew 26:56) except for John who stayed near the cross with Mary and his mother Salome who might have been Mary's sister (John 19:26-27). Let us look at what the Scripture says about the women who traveled with Him.

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9. From the following verses, how did Mary Magdalene and the other women continue to minister to Jesus on the day of His crucifixion and after it?

Matthew 27:55-61	Mark 15:40-16:1	Luke 23:49-24:1

10. What insight does this give to their strength of character during a stressful, emotional time?

11. **Live Out His Love:** Consider the range of emotions Mary Magdalene must have felt through that week. Have you experienced or walked alongside someone who experienced anything similar? What did you learn that will help you the next time?

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## Day Three Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

12. Read the following passages about Jesus' resurrection to fill out the chart below. [Note: Not all the passages include the same information.]

	<b>Matthew 28:1-10</b>	<b>Mark 16:1-14</b>	<b>Luke 24:1-12, 22-26</b>
Who saw the angels			
What the angels told the women to tell			
Who saw Jesus & how they responded			
What Jesus told the women to tell			
The disciples' response to the news			
Jesus' answer to the disciples' response			

13. The Jewish leaders considered women as unreliable courtroom witnesses.

- How was God's use of women as reliable witnesses revealed in these verses?
- Why do you think God entrusted the spectacular news of the resurrection to women?

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**Historical Insight:** That a woman would be the first to see Him is an evidence of Jesus' love as well as a mark of the narrative's historicity. No Jewish author in the ancient world would have invented a story with a woman as the first witness to this most important event. (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 342)

14. **Pray & Love:** Jesus trusted that the women would do what He asked them to do. He has entrusted us to spread the good news as well. Write out the simple gospel message below as you would share it with someone. For ideas, see ["Ways to Explain the Gospel"](#) in the Resources Section pp. 149-150. Practice saying it several times.

## Day Four Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

15. Read John 20:1-13. Describe Mary Magdalene's actions, emotions, and main concern.

16. Read John 20:14-18. Discuss Jesus' conversation with her and Mary's response to Him. [Note: "Rabboni" in v. 16 is personal, meaning "my teacher".]

- Vv. 14-15—

- Vv. 16-17—

- V. 18—

**Focus on the Meaning:** Mary may have embraced Jesus physically [as did the women in Matthew 28:9-10] for the Lord responded, “Do not hold onto Me, for I have not yet returned to my Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them...” Mary’s new *responsibility* was to testify to His risen presence. She was the recipient of four special graces: to see angels; to see Jesus risen; to be the first to see Him alive; and to be a proclaimer of the good news—the latter being something all Christians share with her. (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, pp. 342-343)

17. Why can we assume that Mary Magdalene was probably single?

18. Considering the life of a single woman without children, what could be some advantages of being single as one serves the Lord? Disadvantages?

19. **Live Out His Love:** The local church often undervalues single woman, especially the career single who has never been married nor has any children.

- If you are single, how do you feel included or not included in your church’s ministry to women? What can you do to let the married women know you want to be included?
- In what ways might a single woman feel left out of the ministries to women at your church? How can you be more inclusive of those who are not married and/or mothers?

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast “[Mary Magdalene: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Freedom](#)” after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the following listener guide.

## Mary Magdalene: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Freedom

Jesus died to set you free from spiritual bondage.

### To be set free means that you are in bondage to something.

- You could be in bondage to lies, immorality, hopelessness, and demonic influence. Because of your faith in Jesus, you are freed from spiritual bondage because a greater power moves into your soul—the Holy Spirit Himself. He sets you free from the power of sin and Satan to become what God intended you to be.
- You could also be in bondage to the expectations based on outward performance. Maybe you started out accepting the gift of salvation by faith in Jesus as a free gift. But then you have been thrown into a works-related way of living the Christian life to maintain your acceptance before God. The Bible calls this “living by law.” Living by law is bondage.

### Living by law is bondage

- Living by law can be any human-driven system of works by which people attempt to approach God on their own merits or performance. It is not what is clearly taught in the New Testament about living a life that pleases God. Sin is still “sin.” It is those extra rules that some person or organization devised for you to follow to be a “good Christian” and for God to love you.
- The result is that you stray from enjoying a love-based relationship with Jesus to practicing a works-based religion. When you are living this way, your spiritual life is in bondage to feelings of obligation, guilt, and fear of punishment for not doing it right. Jesus died to set you free from that.

### Living by grace rather than law is freedom.

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”  
(Ephesians 2:8-9)*

- **Here is the key truth that will set you free from any bondage to religious performance: by grace you are saved.** Grace means “undeserved favor.” It is a gift neither you nor anyone else deserves. God gives His favor to someone not because they are good enough to deserve it but because **His love chooses to do so** (Ephesians 2:4-5). We all receive this grace when we trust in Jesus.
- God wants you to relate to Him now on the basis of **His grace**. Jesus paid the complete price for you to be set free from your sinful past. You can do nothing more to make yourself acceptable to God.

*Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 1:13-14)*

- Out of God's mercy comes His grace to you. God's grace is so abundant it is like a cup overflowing. Think of a never-ending waterfall, and you are standing under it being continually refreshed. Grace abundantly poured over you. This overflowing grace sets you free from whatever has you in bondage—sin, guilt, religious expectations, whatever. 1 *Timothy 1:13-14*
- God's grace is His undeserved favor abundantly poured out on those who desperately need Him.

### **Your new identity sets you free to live a radically different life.**

- Paul wrote in Romans chapter 6 that we *have died* with Christ and are raised with Him to a new life. This new life has a new identity—you are *in Christ, a child of God, totally forgiven, accepted, and loved by God*. That is who you are. And that has been true of you since the moment you placed your faith in Jesus Christ. It is how God sees you!
- This new identity SETS YOU FREE to live a radically different life. You are dead to the old “you” and alive to the new “you” in Jesus.
- How do you respond to God's grace that has freed you from spiritual bondage and gives you a chance to live a new life? You respond with love and gratitude for what Christ has done. You respond to God's grace by saying,

“I love you, Lord. I thank you, Lord. I want to approach life your way rather than my own way. I am YOUR woman, Lord, ready to serve you.”

### **Grace motivates you to serve Jesus out of love and gratitude for what He has done for you.**

- You want to live the kind of life that pleases God because you love Him and are thankful for what He has done for you. You can freely accept Jesus' complete payment on the cross for your every sin (past, present, and future). You can freely accept that you are in Christ, a child of God, one of His saints, totally forgiven, accepted, and loved by God. You can freely make the choice to serve Him wholeheartedly, without obligation or fear.
- God wants you to relate to Him on the basis of His grace so that your obedience is based on His love for you, your love for Him, and gratitude for what Christ has done for you. Relax! You have been set free from whatever spiritual bondage you have experienced. Thank Him for this wonderful FREEDOM! That is what a satisfied heart does.

Jesus satisfies our thirst for freedom. A satisfied heart will want to say, “Lord Jesus, I am YOUR woman—today, tomorrow, and forever.”

*Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the goodness of His love. Then, live out that love.*

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*Devoted Women—Identified by Faithfulness*

## Lesson 9: Mary, Jesus' Mom

Time: Jesus' Life and Beyond

### Day One Study

#### Setting the Stage

By the time of Jesus' birth, rabbis had fixed the minimum age for marriage at twelve for girls and thirteen for boys. Normally, the fathers arranged the marriage without consulting either the boy or the girl involved. When the marriage was agreed upon, the groom gave presents to the bride's family. The Jewish betrothal period was a stricter legal relationship than modern engagements, and sexual relations were not allowed. If the wedding was abandoned, a financial penalty would be imposed on the person responsible.

Jesus' mother Mary was raised in a time when women did not have the same rights as men. Women were treated as possessions and listed along with a man's property. A woman could not divorce her husband. Daughters and wives did not inherit property from their father or husband unless there was no male heir. The Ten Commandments called for equal honor to be shown to both parents. Women were subject to the law with identical penalties as male offenders. Daughters shared in family life as much as sons, such as participating in religious festivals.

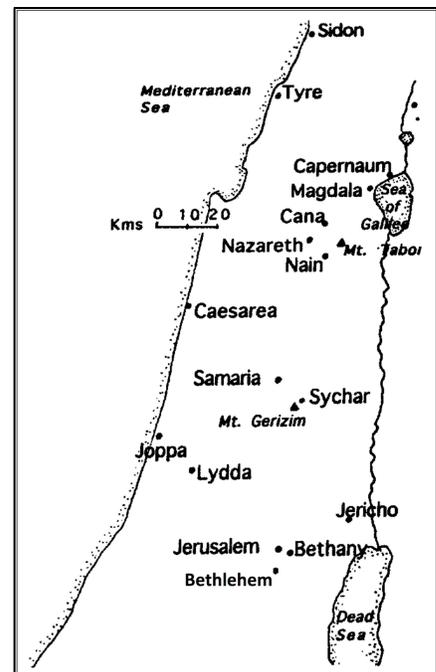
Jesus did not reinforce the practice of treating women as second-class citizens or as possessions. His example demonstrates His equal love and compassion for women as well as men, including His own mother. After studying this lesson, you will see that Mary was an ordinary woman of faith. She gave birth to and raised the boy Jesus, but then she needed to believe in Him with the same saving faith that you and I must have for salvation.

If you are doing this study in a group, please remember that others in your group may have different perspectives about Mary. Be sensitive to that and focus on what the Scriptures say about her.

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

#### Read Luke 1:26-38.

1. Find Nazareth on the map. What facts are given about Mary in vv. 26-30?



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**From the Greek:** The angel Gabriel said that Mary was highly “favored” and that she had found “favor” with God, both words related to the Greek *karis*, often translated in the New Testament as *grace*, meaning “undeserved favor, a gift.” Grace carried the notion of joy, delight, and kindness. What does this tell you about God’s choice of Mary to carry His Son in her womb?

2. What did Gabriel tell Mary about the child she would carry? To see the prophecies God was fulfilling through her, read Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; and 2 Samuel 7:11-12,16.

3. What did the angel say to Mary about God’s power and what He had already done (vv. 36-37)?

4. What does Mary's response reveal about her (v. 38)?

**Read Luke 1:39-56.** Mary hurriedly left Nazareth and traveled 70 miles to visit her relative.

5. From vv. 39-45, how did Mary's encounter with Elizabeth (pregnant with John the Baptist) and encourage both Mary and Elizabeth at this time?

**Focus on the Meaning:** The phrase “mother of my Lord” refers to Mary being the mother of the humanity of Jesus. “Lord” in the New Testament refers to Jesus. Mary is not the mother of God as God has always existed with no beginning and no end. Neither is she the mother of the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, who also had no mother or beginning. God, by grace, chose Mary to be the human mother who would give birth to the Christ child. (“Does the Bible say anything about Mary being ascended into heaven?” at Bible.org)

6. Focus on Luke 1:46-56. Mary's praise song is similar to Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2:1-10). How does this song reveal Mary's heart and her knowledge of God and His Word?

**Historical Insight:** This hymn of praise is known as the Magnificat because in the Latin Vulgate translation the opening word is *Magnificat*, which means "glorifies." (*NIV Study Bible*, note on Luke 1:46-55)

7. What does the expression "God, my Savior" (v. 47) indicate that Mary knew about herself?
8. Mary declared in Luke 1:48: "*From now on all generations will call me blessed (NIV).*" The adjective "blessed" is translated from a Greek word that means, "pronounced happy."
  - Why would she be called blessed (v. 49)?
  - Based on what you have learned so far, why else might all generations call her blessed?
9. **Live Out His Love:** Could God have carried out His plan of salvation without Mary? The angel Gabriel tells us, "For nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37)." Memorize this verse and share any examples in your life when God has demonstrated this fact to you.

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## Day Two Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

### Read Matthew 1:18-25.

10. How was God faithful to Mary in His provision of a husband for her and father for Jesus?

Joseph was a godly man who chose not to publicly divorce or disgrace Mary when he found out she was pregnant. Yet, the people of Nazareth could count months between when Joseph took her as his wife and the baby's birth. The reference made in John 8:41 about "illegitimate children" could possibly be a slander about Jesus' birth. Mary may have lived under this shadow during her life.

11. **Live Out His Love:** Have you or anyone you have known been in a position of social disgrace in which God used it for His higher purposes? Describe what happened.

### *Jesus' birth*

It was late in her pregnancy when "Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken...And everyone went to his own town to register" (Luke 2:1-3). Though women 12 years and older were required to pay a poll tax and register, Mary could have chosen to not go to Bethlehem and let Joseph enroll both of them in the census. They likely knew the prophecy from Micah 5:2. She chose to travel in late pregnancy, knowing their baby would be born in Bethlehem.

12. Read Luke 2:1-7 and Micah 5:2. What did Mary experience?

13. Read Luke 2:8-20. Notice God's idea of a grand birth announcement! The shepherds heard and related the news to the new parents.

- What confirmation did God give to Mary and Joseph about their baby's purpose (v. 11)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What did the shepherds do with this news (vv. 16-18, 20)?

**Think About It:** We consider Jesus' birth in a stable/cave rather than a nice comfy house as something bad. Consider, however, how Jesus "lying in a manger" would make Him more accessible to the shepherds. God knew what He was doing!

14. Read Luke 2:19, 51. What is said about Mary, and what does that mean?

15. Read Luke 2:21-40. Mary and Joseph did what was required by the Jewish Law after the birth of a baby. God used this experience of their faithfulness to Him to provide more confirmation of their son's purpose. Remembering what the angel had told Mary, what do Simeon and Anna add to Mary's understanding of her son's purpose and future?

- Simeon—

- Anna—

16. Read Matthew 2:1-23. Luke 2:39 skips over this episode. What did Mary experience during the first 2-3 years of Jesus' life?

**Think About It:** By now, God used several ways to confirm His message from Gabriel to Mary and Joseph about their baby Jesus: Elizabeth, the angel, the shepherds, Simeon, Anna, and the wise men (Magi).

17. **Live Out His Love:** Think about Mary's experience being a new mom, receiving expensive gifts from majestic strangers, the danger posed to her son by her own king, quick trip to live in a strange place based on her husband's dream, and finally being able to go back home. Lots of ups and downs following God's protection and leading. When have you felt God's protection and/or leading during difficult times in your life?

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## Day Three Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

18. Read Luke 2:41-50. Mary and Joseph were faithful but not perfect parents. Jesus is twelve years old. What did Mary and Joseph experience?

19. Jesus' actions and words reminded His parents of what?

20. Read Matthew 13:55-56. What other children did Mary have in addition to Jesus?

**Scriptural Insight:** There is no Scriptural evidence that these children were not Mary's natural children. The expression in the Greek "her firstborn" (Luke 2:7) means that she naturally had other children afterwards. Otherwise, the Greek phrase for "only son" would have been used as in John 3:16 and Luke 7 (the Widow of Nain). The use of the word "until" in Matthew 1:25 clearly reveals that normal sexual relations between Joseph and Mary occurred after Jesus' birth.

21. Read Luke 2:40,51-52. Jesus' growing up experiences were normal for a Jewish boy. What does this reveal to you about Mary's mothering?

22. **Live Out His Love:** How, if at all, were the basics of the Christian faith taught and reinforced in your home while you were growing up? If you have children, how are you teaching them to have faith in Jesus Christ and helping them to grow in their faith?

## Day Four Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

23. Read John 2:1-11. This takes place early in Jesus' ministry. Jesus' answer to Mary's request was a gentle reminder that He was no longer under her authority, and He was on a different timetable—God's timetable. Note: "Woman" was a respectful term in that culture.

- What did Mary tell the servants in v. 5 which is still applicable to us today?

- Why did Jesus meet the need that Mary identified (vv. 9-11)?

24. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** Read Mark 3:20-21,31-35. Doing what God wanted took a higher priority over doing what Mary or His brothers wanted. There are two issues at work here, both creating tension.

- 1) Jesus had to take a stand opposite of what His family desired. Have you been in such a situation? How have you responded? If this is still a point of conflict, what should you do?
- 2) Jesus' siblings questioned His motives and behavior. Have you ever questioned some dynamic Christian's motives or been envious of his or her walk with God? How did you deal with this situation?

25. Read John 19:25-27.

- What does Mary's presence at the cross reveal about her?
- What could be the reason(s) that Jesus (as the older son) committed His mother's future care to the disciple John (possibly her nephew) rather than to one of her own sons? See John 7:3-5.

**Scriptural Insight:** In 1 Corinthians 15:7, Paul wrote that Jesus did appear to His brother James who believed, became the leader of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15:13), and wrote the New Testament book of *James*. Another brother, Jude, also believed and authored the New Testament book of *Jude*.

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26. Read Acts 1:8, 12-14. The prayer group meeting together after Jesus' resurrection and ascension included Mary, Jesus' brothers, and the women.

- What were they waiting to receive?
- What will they be empowered to do after receiving it?

**Historical Insight:** When did the view of Mary as something more than an ordinary godly woman begin? A document (called the Gospel of James, not considered to be Scripture) written in the late second century AD (150 years after Mary lived) created a whole scenario for Mary. Other information about Mary's life began to be circulated in the 400s AD declaring Mary to have been a child prodigy who made a vow of virginity at the age of 3, remaining in the Temple where she had continual visions and angelic visits. These conjectures (and others added to them) became tradition and eventually "fact." We are to view her as one who revered the Lord and did His will, who put her trust in Him and, therefore, was filled with His joy. Since Jesus' death and resurrection, she shares in the same salvation as the rest of believers.

29. **Live Out His Love:** Mary was a normal human just as we are. Summarize Mary's character qualities revealed in this lesson. Mary's character is attainable to us as well.

- What qualities of this godly woman would you like to have?
- As believers, we have the same Holy Spirit Mary had to help us develop godly character. Trust in Him to be faithful to complete the good work He began in you, submit to His will, and fix your eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of your faith (Hebrews 12:2).

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast "[Mary: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Grace](#)" after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the following listener guide.

## Mary: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Grace

God's grace is His favor toward you that springs from His love for you.

Do you remember in the Christmas story how the angel Gabriel greeted Mary? He said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." You are highly favored. That word "favored" is related to the Greek word *karis*, often translated in the New Testament as grace.

### What is grace?

You have probably heard the word "grace" but may not know what it means. For Christians, "grace" is a very special word.

- God's grace is not about how to get over your clumsiness. You are not going to learn how to move with finesse like a gymnast or figure skater.
- The biblical term "grace" means "undeserved favor or gift." It is receiving a gift or favor that you do not deserve. In the Bible, grace is God giving favor to someone, not because they are good enough to deserve it but because His love chooses to do so. It carries the notion of joy and delight as God shows His kindness to us.

### Mary received God's grace because He loved her.

- God chose her to receive the wonderful blessing of being the human mother for His Son. And He gave her a godly partner in life to rear this boy into manhood. The proper response to God's grace is to love Him back and give Him praise out of a grateful heart. Mary did that, too.
- God gave her protection and leading as she experienced the late pregnancy trip to Bethlehem, danger from a jealous king, and a 2-year hideout in a foreign land. Add to that not understanding what her son's mission would really involve. Yet, she faithfully did her job as mom to Jesus and to his brothers and sisters. Her life experienced lots of ups and downs following God's protection and leading. She experienced His grace to her during all that time.
- God's grace saved her through her faith in His Son. After Jesus' death and resurrection, Mary was part of the group praying together, waiting for the coming Holy Spirit. She believed her Son and trusted in Him for her salvation just like all the others in that group. God's grace poured out on all of them that day of Pentecost when the Spirit came upon them in a visible and audible way.
- God gave her a great legacy in being Jesus' mother. We know that she and Joseph were not perfect parents. But Jesus had the normal life of a Jewish boy growing up. The Bible says that He grew "in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." Having a godly mom was God's grace to Jesus.

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**Godly mothers are a gift of God's grace to their children.**

Jesus satisfies our thirst for His favor. His grace says that we are loved and that He is with us. A satisfied heart will thank God for His grace and show others how to find that grace in Jesus as well.

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the goodness of His love. Then, live out that love.

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*Ministry Women—Identified by Service*

## Lesson 10: Tabitha & Lydia

Time: 35-55 AD The Early Church

### Day One Study

#### **Setting the Stage**

Jesus challenged His followers to become “fishers of people” (Mark 1:17). He spent His second and third year of ministry equipping them with the tools they needed to do this. Jesus prepared them to teach the gospel message, to have compassion on people and meet their needs, and to interact with both the faithful and the skeptics. As Jesus traveled with His followers, He let them take part in his ministry to prepare them for their own work. They watched Him engage all kinds of people—locals, foreigners, preachers, prostitutes, poor, rich, distraught parents, and more.

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

1. Read Luke 9:1-2, 6 and Luke 10:1-2, 9, 16. Jesus sent His followers out in pairs (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1) to practice what they had learned from Him.
  - What authority were they given (9:1)?
  - What were they tasked to do (9:2; 10:2, 9)?
  - What did they experience (9:6)?
  - What could be the responses of the people (10:16)?
2. Jesus has gone back to heaven. Just before He left, He commissioned His followers to do something. Read Matthew 28:19-20. What were all followers commissioned to do?

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3. Jesus' disciples had the authority to preach the gospel and to heal—both for the purpose of making disciples. Remember that the purpose of miracles is to authenticate the messenger and the message being proclaimed as well as to show God's compassion on His people.

- Read Acts 3:1-11. What happened in vv. 1-8?

- Then, what happened (vv. 9-11)?

- Read Acts 3:12-26. Peter took advantage of this opportunity to proclaim the truth about Jesus. What did he declare to the crowd in vv. 16 and 19?

**Think About It:** Evangelism is not about you involving Him in your outreach efforts. It is Him involving you in His...Only the Holy Spirit can open the eyes of unbelievers to the truth of the gospel...It is the job of believers to communicate the gospel. It is the job of the Holy Spirit to convert the heart. (David Souther, *EvanTell*)

4. **Live Out His Love:** Believers communicate the gospel through sharing the gospel message itself and through sharing one's own faith story. People can reject the facts or logic of the gospel, but it is very hard to argue with someone about their experience with knowing Christ. If the Holy Spirit gave you the opportunity to share with a non-Christian about your relationship with Jesus, what would you say?

You can create your own faith story beginning with just 3 words. Here is how:

- Choose the first word to describe your life, feelings, situation, or thoughts before trusting in Christ. Examples: *angry, independent, manipulative, miserable, hopeless, empty, addicted, me-centered, restless, striving, confused, insecure, worried, childlike.*

**Word #1 =** \_\_\_\_\_

- Choose the second word to describe how you came to trust in Christ or decide to follow Him. Examples: *creation, studied, concert, grew, Bible, friend, trouble, observation, evangelist, spouse, loved, teacher, parent.*

**Word #2 =** \_\_\_\_\_

- Choose the third word to describe your life, feelings, situation, or thoughts since trusting in Christ or following Him. Examples: *peaceful, loving, trusting, freedom, servant, hopeful, compassionate, confident.*

**Word #3 =** \_\_\_\_\_

Using your three words, create 1-2 sentences for each word—just a brief explanation how each word relates to your story. 3 words + 1 or 2 sentences per word = 3–6 sentences to tell your story. How simple is that! See the example below. Then, write your story.

*Example:* “Before coming to faith in Jesus Christ, I was **ME-CENTERED** and thought I was in control of my life. If I wanted something to happen (specifically, get a boyfriend!), I had to make it happen! My sisters came to faith before I did, and through them I saw a lack in my own life. When I heard an **EVANGELIST** on TV present the gospel, I realized what the lack was. It was a Person, Jesus Christ, and I prayed and asked Him to forgive my sins. Now, I am most blessed in relinquishing control to Him, **TRUSTING** Him with all my heart, leaning not on my own understanding, acknowledging Him in all my ways, and allowing Him to straighten my paths.

*This activity is adapted from “Create Your Own 3-Word Testimony!” accessed at evantell.org.*

### “Create Your Own 3-Word Faith Story”

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See “My Faith Story Worksheet” in the Resources Section to write a longer version of your story. Edit it down to 5 minutes, get together with some friends and share it. Woohoo!

## Day Two Study

### Setting the Stage

Perhaps one of the most startling cultural changes as a result of Christ's ministry was the change in the status of women. Prior to Christ's coming, women were seen as little more than chattel, with no legal rights to speak of except by virtue of marriage. With the introduction of the Church, the true "Body of Christ," women were seen as founders of churches (Lydia), disciples of Christ (Mary Magdalene), and prophetesses (Philip's daughters). While the dominant culture still held a less than liberated view of women, it seems that in the early church, women were disciples and fellow saints who were held in high esteem by Christians.

Tabitha was one such woman. Though little is known of her background, the account of her restoration from death back to life in Acts is proof not only of Christ's continuing ministry to women but also a lesson to us today of the impact one person's life can have in the everyday "good deeds" we so often take for granted.

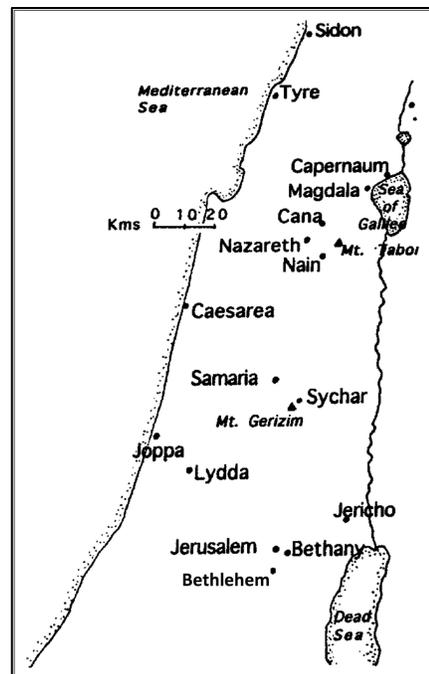
Joppa was on the southern border of the Palestinian region called the Plain of Sharon, the largest coastal plain of Palestine (see the map). Its rich red sandy soil, now under extensive irrigation, contains citrus groves and commercial farms. Five streams and countless underground springs water its surface. Set on a rock that rises about 125 feet above sea level and juts out into the Mediterranean, it had an excellent natural harbor. It was the main seaport of Judah, receiving cedar logs floated down from Lebanon to build the temples of both Solomon (~970 B.C.) and Zerubbabel (~500 B.C.). Under Roman rule, Joppa became part of Herod the Great's territory. Because the people of Joppa hated Herod the Great, he built Caesarea some 40 miles to the north. Joppa declined in importance. The city of Joppa today is Jaffa, a suburb of Tel Aviv.

### Getting to Know Tabitha

After the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7), a great persecution broke out against the Christians in Jerusalem. This caused them to scatter. As they went out, they shared the good news about Jesus with whomever would listen. In this way, God made something that looked "bad" work towards good from His perspective. Tabitha was one of the recipients of God's work.

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

5. Read Acts 9:32-43. Locate Joppa on the map, about 12 miles from Lydda.
  - Where was Lydda in relation to Jerusalem? What does this indicate about the spread of the Gospel?
  - Assume news spread pretty quickly back then although maybe not quite as fast as it does today. What could the people in Joppa have known or heard about Peter?



**From the Greek:** The word “saint” [Acts 9:32] comes from the Greek word *hagios*, “holy,” meaning separated from sin and dedicated to God. All believers are called “holy ones” (*hagioi*) based upon their faith in Jesus Christ, not on any exceptional behavior. A saint is identified by position, what God declares to be true about you. Every believer is one of God’s saints, totally loved and accepted by Him—considered a saint of God by position, not by behavior. (*Vines Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, pp. 307-308)

6. Describe Tabitha (also known as “Dorcas”) as a woman as well as what happened to her.

**Scriptural Insight:** In Acts 9:36, Tabitha is specifically called a disciple. Jesus Christ calls every believer to intentionally follow him as His disciple. A disciple is an active follower or learner. A disciple studies the teachings of another person whom she respects and applies those teachings to her life. To follow Jesus as His disciple means that you make the choice to learn from Jesus through what is taught in the Bible and, in dependent obedience, apply those teachings to your life.

7. How did Tabitha’s life reflect that she was a disciple and was benefiting those around her?
8. Read Acts 9:37-39. How did the Christians at Joppa demonstrate their love for Tabitha, a woman? Consider how far Lydda was from Joppa and the urgency.

Peter was present when Jesus healed Jairus’ daughter (Luke 8:49-56). With Tabitha, he did as Jesus did by doing it privately in the upper room, calling her back to life using her name and holding her hand, then giving her back to her friends. One difference was that Peter got down on his knees and prayed first. This is the first recorded instance in the early church of someone being raised from the dead.

9. What effect did the restoration of Tabitha from death to life have on the people of Joppa (v. 42)?

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10. **Pray & Love:** Part of your faith story is how you are living it out on a daily basis. Tabitha was a woman who knew her gifts and used them to minister to the saints in Joppa—her “sphere of influence.” Reflect on one or both of the following:

- *Your influence on someone*—Are you aware of your gifts and how to use them to serve others? Share an instance in your life when your serving in Jesus’ name made a difference for someone in your “sphere of influence.” Recall the situation, your own feelings, how knowing Jesus motivated you to serve, her response, etc.
- *Someone’s influence on you*—Share an instance when someone else using her gifts of serving in Jesus’ name made a significant impact on you in your faith. Recall the situation, your own feelings, how knowing Jesus motivated her to serve, your response, etc.

## Day Three Study

### **Setting the Stage**

While Saul was breathing out threats against Christians, Jesus confronted Saul and gave him a new life direction (Acts 9:1-30). Saul responded with faith and embraced his new life. He began traveling throughout the Roman Empire on missionary journeys to spread the gospel to the Gentiles. As you read his life, you will see the Bible refers to him by two names. Roman citizens were usually given three names at birth. Saul was his Hebrew name. Paul was his Roman name which he used as he traveled throughout the Roman Empire. We do not know the third name.

Around 51 A.D., Paul and his companions headed out on a second missionary journey. They carried with them the decision reached by the apostles and elders in Acts 15 that the Gentiles did not need to become Jews first in order to be saved. The Holy Spirit directed their path through Asia Minor (modern Turkey) to Troas, preventing them from going to the north or the south. Paul’s dependence on Christ in his life showed up in his flexibility to follow the Lord’s leading on this journey. At Troas, Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia calling him over to help them. Paul immediately said yes to the call and sailed across the Aegean Sea to Philippi (locate on the map below). Luke, the writer of Acts, accompanied them on this journey providing eyewitness testimony of the events recorded.

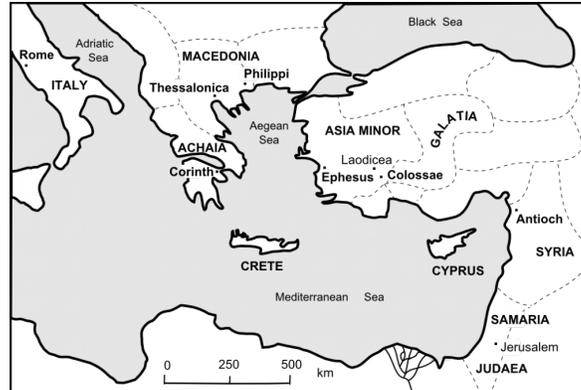
Settlers first arrived in the area of Philippi from the off-coast island of Thasos to mine gold—a Greek gold rush, so to speak! Philip II of Macedon named the city after himself, built a wall, and colonized it in 356 BC. At the Battle of Philippi in 42 BC, Roman generals Mark Antony and Octavian defeated the army of Brutus (Et tu, Brute?) and Cassius. So, Philippi became a Roman colony as a thank you for its help.

Being a Roman colony gave Philippi special privileges (such as few or no taxes), but more importantly it became like a “transplanted” Rome. The primary purpose of colonies was military, for

the Roman leaders felt it wise to have Roman citizens and sympathizers settled in strategic locations. So, Octavian (who became Caesar Augustus) settled former soldiers there in the years following the victory.

Philippi was very influential in its part of Greece. Its 10,000-15,000 residents were mostly Greeks and Romans. Being only 10 miles from the coast, it was a great market for goods that Romans liked and was on a highway for easy transport. Main Street Philippi was the Egnatian Way, the Roman version of an interstate highway that connected Rome to all its satellite cities. Philippi was considered the Gateway to the East and, thus, a very prosperous place. What wouldn't be if you paid no taxes?! Also, it had exceptionally fertile soil and lots of timber for harvesting.

A school of medicine run by a guild of Greek physicians operated in Philippi. It is speculated that Luke (the author of Acts and the physician companion of Paul) had grown up and attended medical school there.



### **Getting to Know Lydia**

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

11. Read Acts 16:11-15. Paul's usual missionary strategy was to go to the local synagogue when he entered a town (see Acts 13:5,14-15; 14:1 and 17:2,10). Where did God send Paul and his companions on this Sabbath day to proclaim the Gospel and to whom?

**Historical Insight:** Being such a Roman city, Philippi had very few Jews, not enough to even establish a synagogue since doing so required at least 10 Jewish men. Without a synagogue present, the few Jews in any town and their Gentile converts met on the Sabbath outside the city walls, near water, to get away from idolatry. The women's prayer group Paul found probably gathered on the banks of the Gangites River a mile and a half west of town.

12. The women were gathered for Sabbath prayer just as Paul and his companions were. Gentiles who worshiped Israel's God were called "God-fearers" or "worshippers of God." Read Acts 10:2; 13:43; 17:4; and 1 Thessalonians 1:9.

- Considering their culture, what choices were these "God-fearers" making?
- Therefore, why do you think "God-fearers" were so open to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

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**Scriptural Insight:** By this time in his ministry, Paul had been sharing the gospel with both men and women who embraced it with joy. Sadly, he also experienced persecution led by prominent “God-fearing” women in one city who had been incited by the Jews against him (Acts 13:50).

13. List everything you can glean about Lydia’s personal and professional life in this passage.

**From the Greek:** “Opened her heart” translates a Greek word meaning “to open completely, to cause to understand a thing.” It carries the idea of giving both understanding and a desire for learning.

14. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** The author of Acts made a point of saying that Lydia was from Thyatira. Research to find out what you can about Thyatira in first century AD—especially the people, businesses, and religion. This gives more background information about Lydia.

**Historical Insight:** Thyatira was famous for the art of dying cloth in purple. Purple was a favorite color of the Romans and, therefore, in great demand because it was used on official togas in Rome and in the colonies. In fact, we still use the term “royal purple.” It was very expensive to produce. We do not know when or why Lydia relocated to Philippi, but it was a smart business move. Macedonian inscriptions show greater freedom for women in that area of the world than anywhere else at this time.

15. God opened Lydia’s heart while Paul was speaking so that she accepted the gospel. Who else was present and thus influenced by Lydia’s becoming a believer and then being baptized right afterwards (v. 15)?

16. How did Lydia use her prosperity and home to further the spread of the Gospel in Philippi? See also Acts 16:40.

17. **Pray & Love:** You can pray for God to open the heart of your nonbelieving friends. While you are praying, you can consider conversation starters that would lead into you sharing your 3-word story. What could you say to lead into sharing your faith story?

Ask Jesus to give you boldness and opportunity to use these soon. ☺

### Day Four Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

18. Read Acts 16:16-40. The other incidents in Paul's visit to Philippi no doubt had a direct effect on Lydia. Summarize what happened to Paul and his companions.

19. Put yourself in Lydia's shoes as a woman, As a new Christian, hostess, and business woman, how might these events have affected Lydia?

20. Where was the last place Paul and his companions met in Philippi? In view of their notoriety, what does this tell us about Lydia?

21. Read Acts 5:42, Romans 16:5, 23 and Philemon 2. What role did hospitality play in the spread of the Gospel?

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22. Ten years later, Paul wrote a letter to the Philippian church. Read Philippians 1:3-8 and 4:14-19.

- How did Paul view this group of believers who began meeting in Lydia's home?
- What kind of church had it become?

23. **Pray & Love:** Believers are told throughout the New Testament to practice hospitality (Romans 12:13). In 1 Timothy 5:9-10, hospitality is listed as a good deed for women. And in 1 Peter 4:9, we are told to do it without grumbling! Hospitality is a great way to build community and share Christ.

- In what ways can hospitality be a great tool for ministry, particularly for building relationships with those who do not know Christ or do not know Him well?
- In what creative ways can you make your home available?
- Does hospitality have to be practiced in a home? Explain your answer.

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast "[Tabitha & Lydia: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Community](#)" after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the following listener guide.

## Tabitha & Lydia: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Community

Sharing community is a way to reach others with His message of love.

Tabitha and Lydia were both part of a community of believers. They both contributed to that community with their resources.

God created women to be social. He chose to use this gift of social skills as an avenue to provide for His people, all of them—men, women, boys, and girls. And women are pretty good at building relationships with other women. After all, we have to share those 20,000 words per day with someone! Women enjoy community.

### Sharing community where you live

- We are to live question-stimulating lives\* in view of our neighbors. Neighbors are those people around us wherever we live or spend our time—house, apartment, office, or factory floor. Jesus describes a question-stimulating life in Matthew 5:16 as being like a light shining with your good deeds visible for people to notice. Your neighbors see something attractive and then ask why.
- That means we need to think of the places where we live and the people who live there as our own "personal community," the geographical place God has planted us and the people He's called us to love in Jesus' name.
- The neighbors who live (or work) near you are usually not people you have chosen. You may not like them at all. But they are those who have been given to you and those to whom you have been given. And you thought we were just shopping for your own living space not your "personal community!"
- Yet, our busy life patterns do not make it easy for us to be good neighbors. And our preference for comfort with our like-minded Christian friends can leave little time or inclination to care for our "personal community." We just might need to rethink how we relate to them.

### Pursuing connections with the people in your neighborhood

*Idea #1: Stay home.* Examine the choices you make and look for ways you can be more fully present in your personal community.

*Idea #2: Be outside in their view.* Take regular walks and see who else is out. Be visible to your neighbors when they might be looking. Do it whenever it works for you AND the ones you want to see. Be intentional about being present with them to build community.

*Idea #3: Ask questions to show you care.* It is okay to get nosy in a good way. We get to know people by getting to know their stories and pay attention well enough to remember some of it for future interactions! Ask questions about their lives, families, work, background. Know their names, their family members' names, their pets' names.

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*Idea #4: Pay attention to what they are doing.* Once again, it is being nosy without becoming invasive. Observe what is happening. Desire to see the people around you. Know when they come home from work and be ready to say hello. Welcome new neighbors and connect them with others on your block. Find ways to just show up. If we are visibly looking, paying attention, and asking questions, we will find out those times of need.

*Idea #5: Pray for them by name.* We tend to care more for the ones we frequently bring before the Father.

*Idea #6: Don't wait too long!* Don't wait too long to share community with someone so you can share Christ with her. You do not know how long she will be near you.

## **Sharing community to share Christ at any age**

- Women are never too old to have need for community or the ability to influence a community. Women who are Jesus followers are never too old to have an impact on their friends—whether younger or older.
- Be grateful that God made you a woman with social skills that are a valuable part of His purposes for His people.

Jesus satisfies our thirst for community. A satisfied heart will thank God for community and reach out to others to share Christ with them.

*Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the goodness of His love. Then, live out that love.*

\*You can read more about this in "[Live a Question-Stimulating Life in View of Your Neighbors](https://blogs.bible.org/live-a-question-stimulating-life-in-view-of-your-neighbors)" on [blogs.bible.org](https://blogs.bible.org).

Ministry Women—Identified by Service

## Lesson 11: Priscilla & Phoebe

Time: 49-62 AD Paul's Second & Third Missionary Journeys

### Day One Study

#### Setting the Stage

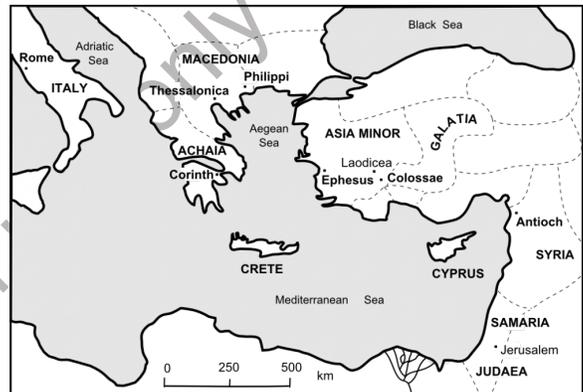
Many of the places Paul visited during his three long journeys were strategic centers of culture, commerce, and communication. The Gospel planted in them would spread quickly to surrounding towns and villages as travelers took the good news home with them. Four of the most important places Paul visited were Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. See the map below.

Corinth, the city of shopkeepers, was Greece's most important trade city. It was two miles inland from the Gulf of Corinth at the foot of a ~2000 ft. rocky hill on top of which stood the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Corinth was the connecting link between Rome, the capital of the world, and the East. It was filled with shops and had two theaters plus an amphitheater that hosted gladiatorial shows and athletics. The city was a melting pot of more than 500,000 people.

In Corinth, Paul joined Aquila and Priscilla as they worked on the same trade together—tent making. Tents were made of hand-woven strips of black or dark brown goat's hair about three feet wide sewn together and reinforced. Goat's hair is resistant to both heat and water. After being washed, it shrinks and becomes taut. The skill of tent making was probably taught to Paul and Aquila in their youth. It was a Jewish tradition to teach young boys a trade. Additionally, Paul's native province of Cilicia was known for its goat's-hair cloth called *cilicium* that was largely used in tent making.

Paul and his new friends left Corinth and traveled to Ephesus, the City of Artemis. Ephesus was also an important trading center at the junction of the Asiatic caravan route to the east and the sea route to Rome in the west. Paul left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus and went to Caesarea. It is in Ephesus where Aquila and Priscilla met Apollos (Acts 18).

Sometime later we find Priscilla and Aquila back in Rome. They had lived in Rome previously until they were required to leave by Claudius. That is when they went to Corinth and met Paul. Rome was the capital of the empire, top ranking in political importance, geographical position, and sheer magnificence. Located on the river Tiber around seven hills approximately 18 miles from the Mediterranean, Rome was full of temples, theaters, palaces, baths, and administrative buildings. But in contrast to this lavish splendor, the ordinary people lived in tenements often three or four stories high. Many were so poorly built that they were nearly falling down. Picture the environment Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla were in as you do your study and refer to the map in the lesson to track their journeys. (Excerpted from *Handbook of Life in Bible Times and Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*)



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### **Getting to Know Priscilla**

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

1. Read Acts 18:1-17. Paul preached the Gospel to the Corinthians, successfully gaining converts for Jesus but not without opposition.
  - How did the Corinthian Jews respond to the Gospel (vv. 6, 8, 12-13)?
  - How did the Corinthian Gentiles (Greeks) respond to the Gospel (vv. 7-11)?
  - How did Jesus encourage Paul?
2. Describe Priscilla and her life situation using everything that is revealed in this passage.

**Historical Insight:** Displaced from Rome because of an edict in AD 49 or 50 from Claudius for all the Jews to leave Rome, Aquila and Priscilla had come to Corinth to ply their trade...Suetonius, a biographer of Roman emperors, described what may have been the occasion for such a decree. In his *Life of Claudius*, he referred to the constant riots of the Jews at the instigation of Chrestus. Possibly, the name Chrestus is a reference to Christ. (Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 405)

3. What brought Priscilla and her husband Aquila together with Paul? How long did Paul (along with Silas and Timothy part-time) stay with them?

**From the Greek:** Priscilla had another name, Prisca, which was probably her formal name. Luke used Priscilla. Paul used Prisca when referring to her

4. Describe what it may have been like for Priscilla and Aquila to have Paul as a daily house guest, coworker, and community influencer.
  
5. What kind of pressure do you think may have been brought to bear on Priscilla and Aquila because of their association with Paul? Consider the effect this could have had on their business and the choices they needed to make.
  
6. **Live Out His Love:** Have you ever had to take your stand for an unpopular cause that was right? What was the cost to you? What did you gain? Reflect on Acts 18:9-10 and let God speak to you through His Word.
  
7. Read Acts 18:18-23. What did Priscilla and Aquila do when Paul left Corinth (verse 18)? What does this tell you about her as a woman and them as a couple?
  
8. As Paul sailed for Syria, Ephesus was a stop on the way.
  - What happened after they arrived in Ephesus?
  
  - In what ways would staying in Ephesus be a step of faith for Priscilla?

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9. **Live Out His Love:** Whether or not Priscilla and Aquila were Christians before they met Paul, they were certainly Christians by the time they left Corinth. And knowing that Paul was willing to leave them in Ephesus to carry on ministry there tells us that Paul felt they were established in their faith. To establish means, “to build a solid foundation, to provide strong roots.” Read the paragraph below then answer the questions that follow.

**Focus on the Meaning:** All Christians (new or old) need to be established in some basic information: 1) Who Christ is, what He accomplished on the cross, what His resurrection means, and your identity in Christ. 2) How to read/study a Bible. 3) Who the Holy Spirit is and how He works in our lives. 4) Living by the Spirit’s power rather than living by the flesh. 5) What prayer is—knowing God the Father’s love. 6) Obedience flowing from love and gratitude rather than obligation. 7) Being part of the Body of Christ and enjoying its community. 8) Telling others about Jesus.

When you were a new or young believer, what did someone use to establish you? Did you go to a new believers’ class? Have you been rooted with this basic information? Of the list above, what do you feel that you still need to know?

**Think About It:** We prepare our children to know certain basics about who they are before we send them to kindergarten—their name, parents’ names, address, phone number, to obey and to share. Yet, we do not usually do the same for new Christians. When we invite a new Christian to church or to a small group, we assume those activities will fill in their gaps of understanding. But unless a class, small group study, or sermon series is designed to give the basics of the faith in easily understandable language, those new believers may not get established. Those of us who are growing Christians need to help establish new and young believers get a good start in their life with Christ. You can use our *Graceful Beginnings* studies at [melanienewton.com/new-believers](http://melanienewton.com/new-believers) to disciple new and young Christians.

## Day Two Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word.

10. Read Acts 18:24-28. What information is given about Apollos that Priscilla and Aquila would have also seen?

11. Discuss their response to Apollos, including their attitude and approach. What is the significance of the word "they" in verse 26?

12. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** To see the importance of how Priscilla and Aquila established Apollos in his faith, read Acts 18:27-28; 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4-6,21-23; 4:6; 16:12 and Titus 3:13. Briefly describe what became of Apollos.

13. **Live Out His Love:** Where are the new and never-been-discipled believers in your life? Most likely, they are where you are presently connected—Bible studies, mothers' groups, where you work or live, and in your church. Don't assume that woman sitting next to you knows her identity in Christ. She may not be a believer yet. She may be a new believer. She may be a long-time believer who has never been discipled and feels ignorant compared to others.

Why is it important to come alongside someone who is new or lacking truth in her life rather than assuming she will "catch up" just by being in a group or attending church?

Follow these key steps that reflect what Priscilla and her husband did for Apollos:

- **Pay Attention** – Listen well to what she is saying. Is she new to your church or attending any church? Is she new to doing Bible study, hesitant to answer questions, lacking Bible familiarity, or revealing she is wanting to know God? Is she leaving questions unanswered in the study? Consider how you can help her.
- **Come Alongside** – If she is new to attending church, studying the Bible for herself, or a new believer, she needs an established Christian woman to come alongside her. Invite her to join you for an hour sometime in the next week—early before work, during the day, after supper. It does not matter. Just find a time that works and do it. Share a little of your stories when you get together. Find out where she is in her walk of faith. If she is not there yet, ask if you can share the gospel with her. Offer to meet with her for a few weeks (6-8) to help her get established in her faith walk. If she says, "Yes," then choose a grace-oriented basic guide for new believers or new-to-the-Bible Christians to work through

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together. Make sure she has a good Bible. Let her ask you questions. Depend on Jesus' power and leading to help you do it.

**Focus on the Meaning:** Does "pay attention" and come alongside her" sound like mentoring? Yes, it does. Mentoring is someone older in the Lord helping someone younger in the Lord understand and apply biblical truth to everyday life. It is the "how" of discipling.

Ask Jesus to help you see the one needing you and to make you willing to be a "Priscilla" to her. Trust Him and invite her to get together with you this week and talk about it.

For additional application, read "Allison's Story: Coming Alongside Monica" in the Resources Section on pages 147-148.

14. Read 1 Corinthians 16:19. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, three years after first leaving Priscilla and Aquila there. He mentions Priscilla and Aquila in 16:19. What are they doing there?

15. Read Romans 16:3-5.

- Where were Priscilla and Aquila now?
- What does Paul call them (v. 3)?
- What were they still doing (v. 5)?
- What might have Paul been referring to when he said "they risked their lives for me" (v. 4)? Refer back to previous questions.
- Why should all the Gentile churches be grateful to them?

16. Read 2 Timothy 4:19. This is Paul's last letter written to his spiritual son, Timothy, who was pastoring the church at Ephesus. What does Paul's mention of Priscilla and Aquila tell us about them?

17. **Live Out His Love:** Jesus did not send out His disciples to minister alone (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1). With this in mind, do you have a ministry partner in the church, workplace, community, women's group, or other? How are you at working together as a team with your ministry partner(s)? If you do not have a ministry partner, where do you get encouragement to do your ministry to others?

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## Day Three Study

### Getting to Know Phoebe

As Paul traveled throughout the Roman Empire, he shared the gospel and planted churches. He recognized and appointed leaders for each of the churches. Phoebe was such a leader.

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

18. Read Romans 16:1-2 in at least 3 translations. From the limited amount of information in vv. 1-2, describe Phoebe. Also, find out the meaning of her name and location of Cenchrea.

**From the Greek:** Phoebe is described by Paul as a *diakonon* of the church. The word *diakonon*, "servant," is used for the office of deacon (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8,10,12) as well as used generally (Romans 15:8; 1 Corinthians 3:5). Use of the word with the phrase "of the church" strongly suggests some recognized position in the church at Cenchrea, a fact appropriate for a person serving as Paul's emissary. She was the emissary to deliver Paul's letter to the Romans. She was also a *prostasis*, meaning "a protectress, patroness." It is a word of dignity and indicates the high esteem with which she was regarded, as one who had been a protectress of MANY. The word was used as a title of a citizen in Athens, who had the responsibility of seeing to the welfare of resident aliens who were without civic rights. Among the Jews, it signified a wealthy patron of the community.

19. Knowing the meaning of the words Paul used to describe Phoebe gives you a great deal more insight into Phoebe's life.

- Look up *patroness* in a dictionary.
- Now write a couple of sentences describing who this very real woman named Phoebe is.

**Think About It:** Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and the many others who supported Jesus (Luke 8:3) were also patronesses.

20. So what was Paul's view of this woman?

21. What did Paul ask of the Roman church on her behalf?
22. **Live Out His Love:** What can you learn from Phoebe's example, especially in her example as a patroness? In what ways can you be a patroness for other believers?
23. Read Romans 16:3-15. List the other women mentioned by Paul in Romans 16, including any information Paul gives us about them and their ministry to the church. In vv. 6 and 12, the Greek word translated "work hard" means "to labor with wearisome effort, to toil to the point of exhaustion."
24. Would you say that Paul demonstrated he had the same value for women as a follower of Christ that Jesus showed to women during His lifetime? Explain your answer.

**Historical Insight:** Jesus gave women status and respect equal to men. Not only did He break with the anti-female culture of His era, but He set a standard for Christ-followers...Paul elevates women to a position of honor previously unknown in the world...As Christianity spread throughout the world, its redemptive effects elevated women and set them free in many ways. The Christian ethic declared equal worth and value for both men and women...As a result of Jesus Christ and His teachings, women in much of the world today, especially in the West, enjoy more privileges and rights than at any other time in history. It takes only a cursory trip to an Arab nation or to a Third World country to see how little freedom women have in countries where Christianity has had little or no presence. It's the best thing that ever happened to women. (Sue Bohlin, "Christianity: The Best Thing That Ever Happened to Women," probe.org)

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25. **Live Out His Love:** Remember what your life was like before you trusted in Christ. Or, perhaps you trusted in Christ as a child so you do not remember, but later you made the choice to follow Him with your life and experienced His love for you. Have you made the decision to follow Jesus as His disciple? Are you willing to live for Him as a disciple maker in your sphere of influence? Look back on all that you have learned in this study to prepare you to be a disciple maker. What can you intentionally do in your life from this day forward?

## Day Four Study

### Recap of “Live Out His Love” Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to bring to mind what you learned.

**Final Thoughts:** Author Dorothy Sayers, a friend of C.S. Lewis, wrote this: “Perhaps it is no wonder that the women were first at the Cradle and last at the Cross. They had never known a man like this Man—there had never been such another. A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, who never flattered or coaxed or patronized; who never made arch jokes about them, never treated them either as ‘The women, God help us!’ or ‘The ladies, God bless them!’; who rebuked without querulousness and praised without condescension; who took their questions and arguments seriously, who never mapped out their sphere for them, never urged them to be feminine or jeered at them for being female; who had no ax to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend; who took them as He found them and was completely unselfconscious.”  
(Dorothy L. Sayers, *Are Women Human?* p. 47)

26. Which account of women in the New Testament was your favorite? Why?

27. In what ways has this study increased your confidence that Jesus truly does care for women?

28. **Live Out His Love:** Praise Jesus for His love for you as a woman and as an heir, fully equal to men, of everything that He has provided for you in Him. Use any creative means to praise Him now (poetry, prose, prayer, art, craft, music).

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**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast "[Priscilla & Phoebe: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Purpose](#)" after doing today's study to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide at the end of the lesson.

## Priscilla & Phoebe: Jesus Satisfies Your Heart with Purpose

Jesus followers become disciple-makers.

We all like to feel we have a purpose. But where do you get your purpose? You have two choices: get it from your culture or get it from Jesus Christ. For believers, when we stay focused on the purpose Jesus gives us, our hearts will be satisfied to live that out.

### Jesus calls us to a new life with Him.

Christianity is Christ! It is about Jesus Christ and our relationship with Him. We enter into that relationship by faith in Him as the Son of God who lived a perfect life in a human body, died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, and rose again from the dead with a new resurrection body so He could give us new life as well. Jesus calls us to new life.

### Jesus clothes us with Himself.

The moment we accept this call to new life, Galatians chapter 3 verse 27 says that we get “clothed” with Christ (Galatians 3:27). This means that when God looks on us, He sees His own Son. We become totally loved and accepted in God’s sight. And we become the walking, talking, visible representatives of an invisible God. Jesus clothes us with Himself.

### Jesus commissions us with a two-fold purpose.

- *To follow Jesus as His disciple*—A disciple is an active learner. To follow Jesus means to make the choice to learn from Jesus through what is taught in the Bible and to apply those teachings to your life. We do that through depending upon Him to help us be obedient to him. The result is Jesus living His life through you, influencing those around you so they can experience His love as well.
- *To live for Jesus as a disciple-maker*—Jesus told His disciples to go and “make disciples” as He did. His disciples took in what they learned from Him and shared it with others, taking others through the process. Then, the new Christians could in turn share about Christ with someone else and disciple them. That is how to live for Him as a disciple-maker. Making disciples who make disciples who make disciples.

### Jesus empowers us to fulfill that purpose.

His Spirit lives in us giving us the power to do what Jesus commissions us to do. You and I can be disciple-makers because the Spirit makes us able. We are to obey Jesus and trust His Spirit to work through us. And being scared is a good thing because we will rely on Him more.

### Getting distracted from our purpose can cause restlessness.

- It is easy to get sidetracked from our purpose. Maybe you have feelings of inadequacy or a fear of rejection. Or it is a matter of comfort. It is a whole lot more comfortable hanging out in community with growing Christians than to be around those who do not know Christ.
- Sometimes we get stuck in the first part of our purpose: following Jesus as His disciple. We go to Bible Study after Bible Study, growing in Bible knowledge. Women need to know and understand God’s Word so they can know their God better and His way of approaching life. But as this knowledge accumulates, women get restless and focus on

the wrong things. That is a clue that you have been distracted away from your whole purpose. We are to be following Jesus as His disciple while living for Him as disciple-makers at the same time.

### **Three powerful tools help you fulfill your purpose and avoid restlessness.**

When it comes to making disciples, you have three powerful tools to help you fulfill your purpose. 1) The Holy Spirit at work in you and in the world. 2) The gospel message, and 3) Your own faith story.

### **Discipling new believers is essential to your purpose**

Once someone trusts in Christ, they need to be disciplined. We should not assume that if someone comes to church or Bible study, they will get what they need to know by just participating.

- We have women all around us who were not raised in a church setting. Or, they attended a church that even discouraged personal Bible study. They are new to the Bible. They have no clue how to read it to feed themselves. When they trust in Christ, they are like the newborn babies in our own families — hungry for the milk of God's Word. Starving for it.
- What they need first and foremost is to get to know Jesus well and be secure in their relationship with Him. Reading through the gospels is a great way to do that. Establishing that relationship with Jesus is top priority. Newborn babies do not need to know all the family history before we establish our love relationship with them. Neither do baby Christians need to know Israel's history. They need to know Jesus first.
- All Christians whether new or old need to know some basics like who Jesus Christ is, what He did for them on the cross, what His resurrection means, and their new identity in Christ. They need to know how to live in freedom from the flesh because they can live the Spirit's power. They need to learn to depend on the Lord and how that dependence leads to obedience to Him.
- Thankfully, Jesus does not leave you alone to work really hard to do what He has asked you to do. He empowers you to fulfill your purpose. The power comes from God's Spirit who lives inside you from the moment you trust in Christ for salvation.
- Your response is to live dependently on His power in your life by faith. You are simply to obey Him and trust His Spirit in you to work through you. And being a little scared is a good thing because you will rely on Him more. Feel free to say, "Lord Jesus, I can't do this on my own. I will trust you to do this in me and through me." Then, watch what He does!

Jesus Christ calls you to a new life, clothes you with Himself, commissions you with a purpose, and empowers you to fulfill that purpose.

Jesus satisfies your thirst for purpose and helps you live it out daily. A satisfied heart recognizes her purpose and intentionally lives it out while depending on Jesus Christ to do so.

*Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the goodness of His love. Then, live out that love.*

Keep reading to get a peek at Lesson One of *Healthy Living: A Study of Colossians & Philemon*—the first study in the "Growing in Godliness" series. Take hold of truth in your daily life as the prescription for healthy living.

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## Preview of "Healthy Living"

PODCAST LISTENER GUIDE

### *Introduction Podcast: Truth Is the Prescription for Healthy Living*

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast "[Truth Is the Prescription for Healthy Living](#)" as an introduction to the whole study. Use the following listener guide.

Just as physical bodies are attacked by germs that make us sick, we are attacked by spiritual infections that leave us weak and dissatisfied. The only way to fight or avoid infection is to be satisfied by the truth of God we have in Jesus Christ. That gives us a strong immune system to fight and prevent spiritual infections.

#### **What Is a Spiritual Infection?**

- A spiritual infection=any opinion or belief that contradicts established biblical truth.
- The prescription for healthy living has three parts: 1) dwell in the truth of God you can know, 2) humbly accept what you do not know or understand, and 3) discern any teaching that you read or hear through the complete revelation of God's Word.

#### **Prescription part 1: Dwell in truth you can know.**

- To dwell in truth is to make your home there. That means God's truth dominates your thoughts and attitudes, governs your life, and satisfies your heart.
- God gives us plenty of truth in the Bible that we can know and trust.
- God wants us to know the truth He has revealed to us, to make our home in that truth.  
*Ephesians 1:17-19*

#### **Prescription part 2: Humbly accept what you do not know or understand.**

- Some things we read in the Bible we do not understand now but might in the future.

*"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law."  
(Deuteronomy 29:29)*

- There is so much we can know now. But there are things we will never know or understand.

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- We must make the choice to humbly accept what we do not know or understand. And be satisfied with it.

### **Prescription part 3: Discern teaching through the complete revelation of God's word.**

#### ***Evaluate what you read and hear by comparing it with the whole Bible.***

- Read any verse in the context of the passage where it is found—the paragraph, the chapter, and the book.
- Examine the original words to see what the writer meant and what the audience likely understood.
- Look at other verses with similar content to let the Bible interpret itself. And you should always ask the Holy Spirit for understanding.

#### ***Avoid the “look-imagine-see” dragon when viewing any verse.***

The “look-imagine-see” dragon shows up this way: someone *looks* at a verse or passage, *imagines* what they want it to say, then in their mind *sees* what they have imagined through twisting word meanings and interpretations. Once it starts, it is like a fiery dragon burning truth in its path. Cultural influence on Bible study feeds this dragon.

- Tame the “look-imagine-see dragon” by considering the Bible as sufficient on its own, not needing to be “improved.”
- Tame the “look-imagine-see dragon” by basing your faith on what **is** in God's Word, not something you have just heard about it and not something you are imagining to be there.
- Tame the “look-imagine-see dragon” by following the inductive process for Bible Study—observation, interpretation, and application. Then, you can dwell in truth you can know.

**Think About It:** We will never know all there is to know about God. There will always be some mystery about Him. But there is plenty enough revealed in the Bible to satisfy your desire to **know him truthfully** and to know how to live your life in Christ truthfully.

Infection is bad. Untreated infection can be deadly. Knowing the truth of God that you have in Jesus Christ gives you an immune system that fights and prevents spiritual infection.

*Let Jesus satisfy your heart needs with His truth and His love so you can get well and stay well.*

# Lesson 1: The Gospel Received

Colossians 1:1-8

## Day One Study

### *The ABCs of Colossians and Philemon*

#### AUTHOR

Paul identifies himself as the author of this letter written to the church at Colosse. Paul, whose Hebrew name was Saul, was born in Tarsus, a major Roman city on the coast of southeast Asia Minor. Tarsus was the center for the tent making industry; Paul was trained in that craft as his occupation (his primary paying profession). As a Jewish Pharisee from the tribe of Benjamin, Paul was trained at the feet of Gamaliel, a well-respected rabbi of the day. Saul was an ardent persecutor of the early church until his life changing conversion to Christianity.

After believing in Jesus Christ as his Savior, Paul was called by God to take the gospel to the Gentiles. This was an amazing about-face for a committed Pharisee like Paul who ordinarily would have nothing to do with Gentiles. Paul wrote 13 letters that are included in the New Testament. Tradition has it that Paul was beheaded shortly after he wrote 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy in 67 AD.

#### BACKGROUND

The country village of Colosse lay in the beautiful Lycus Valley about 100 miles east of Ephesus in modern Turkey. It was 1 of 3 ancient towns (Colosse, Hierapolis, and Laodicea) situated close to each other along a major trade route between the big city of Ephesus to the west and the Euphrates River to the east. What each city did affected the others. The population of Colosse was mostly Gentile of Greek descent. But a large Jewish group had been relocated there from Mesopotamia by Antiochus in the second century BC, bringing with them eastern influences. Because of being near a major trade route, the town was influenced by ideas and practices from both the east (Mesopotamia) and the west (Rome). So, the mindset was mainly Greek with influx of new ideas from the East and other parts of the Roman Empire. Over time, the road system changed, and Colosse lost its importance. Laodicea became the greater city. In the 7th-8th centuries, the people moved to a fortress south of the city and in the 12th century, the Turks destroyed Colosse. Today, Colosse is composed of uninhabited ruins. Motorist guides to Turkey point out Laodicea's ruins but do not even mention Colosse.

On his third missionary journey, Paul spent 3 years in Ephesus (~54-57 A.D), a large city of 250,000 people. While there, Paul held classes every day for anyone wanting to learn about Jesus Christ, having their sins forgiven, and gaining a new way to live. The gospel spread throughout that part of Asia Minor. One of Paul's students named Epaphras traveled 100 miles east back to his hometown of Colosse to bring the gospel to the people living there. A few Jews believed the message about Jesus, but it was mostly the Greeks and Romans who listened and trusted in Jesus to take away their sins. They started worshiping God together as a church. Epaphras also started churches in Hierapolis and Laodicea. The churches grew larger. Then, false teaching began to infiltrate them.

While Paul was imprisoned in Rome for 2 years, Epaphras headed to Rome to discuss with Paul what was happening back home. The church was now about 5 years old. Paul had never met the Colossians, but he loved these young Christians very much. The heresy (an opinion or belief that contradicts established religious truth) that Paul discovered in Colosse was like an infection in the Body of Christ there. False teachers taught that Jesus was not *the* Lord, just a lord. They were teaching that faith in Jesus was not enough for them to be spiritual. They needed to add other

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“experiences” to the mix. To contradict this infection, we find in Colossians the greatest declaration of Christ’s deity and sufficiency found in Scripture.

**Focus on the Meaning:** I love this truthful phrase regarding Jesus Christ and our salvation through Him that was so aptly worded by a dear Bible teacher in the 1980’s (Vickie Kraft). *“Jesus Christ is above all powers and authorities, in all believers, and is all we need for earth and heaven!”* ‘Nuff said. We are going to hang onto that truth!

## CONTEXT

From his prison confinement, Paul wrote a general letter to pass around to the whole region of Asia Minor (the letter to the Ephesians) as well as a letter specifically to the churches in the Colossian area (the letter we know as Colossians). He wrote a third letter, a personal one, to a rich landowner named Philemon about his runaway slave Onesimus. These three letters plus the one to the Philippians are called the “Prison Epistles” since Paul wrote them while he was imprisoned in Rome. Paul’s co-worker Tychicus delivered the letters to Ephesus and Colosse. Onesimus delivered the personal letter to his master, Philemon.

Colossians is found in the New Testament with Ephesians and Philippians, the other two letters written about the same time during Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome. Philemon, though written at the same time as Colossians, is the shortest and so is located at the end of the letters from Paul. As you will discover, small does not mean less important.

1. What grabbed your attention from the ABCs above?

## **Healthy Living**

Every parent knows that when a baby is burning with fever, there is an infection in the small child’s body! You know how to recognize an infection in a physical body by its symptoms.

The same is true regarding a spiritual infection. Any opinion or belief that contradicts established biblical truth can cause an infection in the Body of Christ. The term used to describe that is “heresy.” It is not just error; it is anti-truth! And like an infection in the human body, heresy always affects life so it must be addressed.

A spiritual infection is usually fed by looking to the wrong places to get your heart needs satisfied. The results are disappointment, fear, resentment, and many other negative thoughts and behaviors.

Thankfully, the answer to all spiritual infections is the truth that has been given to us in the Bible, especially in the New Testament. Knowing truth gives us a spiritual immune system that fights and prevents infection in our hearts and minds. Truth is the prescription for healthy living.

This prescription for healthy living has three parts: First, you dwell in the truth of God you can know. Next, you humbly accept what you do not know or understand. And then, you discern any teaching that you read or hear through the complete revelation of God’s Word. These three parts help you to fight spiritual infections or prevent their influence over you.

We will see how that works throughout this study of Colossians and Philemon. We will never know all there is to know about God. There will always be some mystery about Him. But there is plenty

enough revealed in the Bible to satisfy your desire to **know him truthfully** and to know how to live your life in Christ truthfully.

Infection is bad. Untreated infection can be deadly. Knowing the truth of God that you have in Jesus Christ gives you an immune system that fights and prevents spiritual infection. Let Jesus satisfy your heart needs with His truth and His love so you can get well and stay well.

2. Have you recognized an area of your life where you have been infected by some kind of teaching that contradicts established biblical truth?

***Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.***

## **Day Two Study: Get the Big Picture of Colossians**

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

In all of our *Joyful Walk Bible Studies*, we follow the inductive process for Bible Study. The inductive process starts with observation, looking carefully at what the text actually says. ***What does the Bible say?*** The next step is interpretation, which is trying to understand the author's intended meaning—to him and to the audience who would read or hear it. ***What does it mean?*** Once you know what the Bible says and what it means, then you are ready for application, which is learning how to live this out in your life. ***What application will you make?*** When you follow the inductive process for Bible Study, you will be able to confidently dwell in that truth.

***What does the Bible say? (This is the "Observation" step in the process of Bible Study.)***

Where do we begin? Have you ever heard the saying, "You can't see the forest for the trees?" The best way to study any book of the Bible is to begin with the "forest" (survey the whole) and then proceed to the "trees" (the individual parts). We will start by getting an overview of what Paul wrote in his letter to the Colossians.

Today, read the letter called Colossians at one sitting. Read it as it was intended—a letter from one dear friend to another. It will take about 8 minutes. You can read the letter in any translation of the Bible you choose. A copy of Colossians (NIV translation) is included in this study guide before Lesson One. Feel free to mark anything that grabs your attention and look for the main topics. Then, answer the questions below. Ready? Go!

3. What grabbed your attention from this first reading of Paul's letter?

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4. What would you say were the main subjects that Paul covered in this letter?
5. What issues seem to be bothering the Colossian church?
6. Skim over the letter again. Using the letter printed in this study guide before Lesson One:
- Mark anything that refers to being "in Christ" (also in Him, by Him, through Him, with Him, in the Lord).  
How many times does Paul emphasize this relationship? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Paul, the master communicator, often uses the enemy's very own words to refute bad teaching. Mark "fullness," "complete," "mystery," "knowledge," and "wisdom" (plus any variations on these words).  
How many times does he use these terms? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What questions do you have after reading Colossians that you hope to be answered in this study?

***Respond to the Lord about what you learned today. Ask God to show you what He wants you to learn through this study of Colossians.***

## Day Three Study

**What does the Bible say?** (This is the "Observation" step in the process of Bible Study.)

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Let us start digging into this wonderful letter from God to us. For every lesson, we will begin with reading the whole passage to get the big picture before we study the verses more closely.

Read the Bible passage below (NIV). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) topics you have seen before in this letter. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect.

**1** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

<sup>2</sup> To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

<sup>3</sup> We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, <sup>4</sup> because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people—<sup>5</sup> the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel <sup>6</sup> that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. <sup>7</sup> You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, <sup>8</sup> and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

8. As you read any of Paul's letters, be sure to pay attention to the introductions. What important information does Paul include in the first two verses of his letter to the Colossians?

**From the Greek:** Whereas older translations used the all-inclusive word "brothers" in verse 2, the Greek word (*adelphoi*) refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God's family. The NIV translators have chosen "brothers and sisters" to use here for clarity. You will also see this in Colossians 4:15.

9. Look at the first 3-4 verses of Paul's other letters (start with Romans then go through Philemon.) In how many of them does He refer to Jesus as "Lord Jesus Christ?" Note: "Lord" (Gr. *kyrios*) means "master, sovereign." Does Paul consistently teach the same thing about Jesus to all the churches or just to the Colossians?

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**What does it mean?** (This is the “Interpretation” step in the process of Bible Study.)

10. Looking at vv. 3-8:

- What did Paul say about their faith, love and hope (vv. 3-5a)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What else about this church made Paul excited and thankful (vv. 5b-8)?

**Scriptural Insight:** The Holy Spirit had created love for Paul in the Colossians. This is the only reference to the Holy Spirit in this epistle. In Colossians Paul ascribed the activities of God that he normally associated with the Holy Spirit to Christ. He probably did this to glorify Jesus Christ before the Colossians who were being taught that Christ was less than He is. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on Colossians 2020 Edition*, p. 17)

11. **Deeper Discoveries (optional):** We tend to gloss over the triad—faith, hope, and love—because we have heard the words so often. But they are the marks of real spiritual life. Look up these passages and discover how the 3 words (faith, hope and love) are related to one another and are manifested in a believer's life—Romans 5:2-5; Galatians 5:5-6; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, 5:8; Hebrews 10:22-24 and 1 Peter 1:3-5, 22. Summarize what you learn.

12. Since Paul had not met these people, how do we know the Colossians had received the complete gospel from Epaphras?

13. Using the following verses, what is the gospel?

- Acts 2:22-24—

- Acts 16:30-31—
  
- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4—

*Summary:*

14. What is the significance of Paul stressing that the gospel they received had been bearing fruit everywhere?

**Think About It:** Heresies (such as the one at Colosse) are local and harmful; but truth is universal and helpful. One of the unmistakable characteristics of the true gospel is God's grace in all its truth. Some preach a "different gospel—which is really no gospel at all" (Gal. 1:6-7). This is because it is a gospel of grace plus works, or faith plus works. But the true gospel is one of grace alone (Rom. 11:6; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7). (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 670)

***What application will you make for healthy living?*** (This is the "Application" step in the process of Bible Study.)

15. When did you hear the gospel and trust its message? Did what you receive match what Paul and Epaphras preached?

***Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.***

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## Day Four Study: TRUTH – the Prescription for Healthy Living

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Heresy (an opinion or belief that contradicts established religious TRUTH) is an infection in the Body of Christ. Heresy is not just error. It is anti-truth! And like an infection in the human body, heresy always affects one's spiritual health (as well as emotional, mental, and sometimes physical health). So, heresy must be addressed. It cannot be ignored. Thankfully, the answer to all heresy is TRUTH! Knowing truth gives us a spiritual immune system that fights and prevents infection. That is the prescription for healthy living. Here is how it works:

### ***Dwell in Truth You Can Know***

To “dwell” means to make your home in. It is what dominates your thoughts and attitudes, governs your life, has the most influence on you. God gives us plenty of truth in the Scriptures that we can know and trust. There are 66 books of revelation given. 1189 chapters. If we just took 1 chapter per day and wrote down all the truths about God and our relationship with Him that is revealed to us, it would take us more than 3 years to get through the whole Bible! God wants us to know the truth He has revealed. He wants us to make our home— to dwell— in that truth. It is for our own good!

16. Read Ephesians 1:17-19. List all the truths Paul said we could know about our God.

17. Now, read Colossians 1:1-8. List the truths about God and His relationship to us that we can KNOW.

Look at all that God says we can KNOW! Each passage we read or study has plenty of truth that we can KNOW with certainty and allow to govern our lives. DWELL in truth you can know.

### ***Humbly Accept the “I Don’t Know or Understand”***

In the midst of all 1189 chapters in the Bible are verses we just do not understand. Perhaps you do not understand it now but will in the future as you get more confident in Bible study and hear great teaching that helps you understand. But there are things we will never know or understand.

18. Read Deuteronomy 29:29. What does it declare?

Notice the emphasis on the things revealed—we can KNOW them. But there are “secret things” the Lord has not revealed yet. As we study the Bible, we can do our best to try to understand what is written—examining the original words to see what the writer meant and what the audience understood, looking at cross-references to let the Bible interpret itself, and ask the Spirit for understanding. But you may never understand something you read. Don’t let that unnerve you.

19. Make note of anything in Colossians 1:1-8 that you do not understand at this time.

DWELL in truth you can know (the list you made in Question 17). And HUMBLY ACCEPT the “I don’t know or understand.”

### ***Discern Teaching through the Complete Revelation of God’s Word***

To dwell in the truth of God’s Word, we must **discern what we read and hear** by comparing it with the complete revelation of God’s Word. We cannot extract pieces of it and build our foundation on that. Nor should we build our faith on experiences and feelings. There’s junk out there about God so it is important to really get to know the God of the Bible.

**Avoid the “look-imagine-see” way of looking at any verse**, which leads to error. What do I mean by “look-imagine-see?” Someone *looks* at a verse or passage, *imagines* what they want it to say, and then “sees” in their mind what they have imagined through twisting word meanings and interpretations.

Cultural influence on Bible study feeds this “look-imagine-see” process. You look at the passage, imagine a way for it to fit a particular cultural slant, then you see what you want to see. Many types of false teaching through the years have started with this kind of “look-imagine-see” process. Avoid doing that by following the inductive process of Bible Study: observation (what the text says), interpretation (what was the author’s intended meaning—to him and to his audience that would read or hear it), and application (how to live this out in your life). That is the best way to study the Bible. Look at what is there. Learn what it means and teaches you. Then, live it out in your life.

You want to make sure you are basing your faith on what is in God’s Word, not something you have heard before and not something you are imagining to be there. Avoid that “look-imagine-see” way of looking at the Bible.

We will never know all there is to know about God. There will always be some mystery about Him. But there is plenty enough revealed in the Bible that we can KNOW HIM TRUTHFULLY and know how to live our life in Christ truthfully. The Holy Spirit uses the Scripture we read and study to teach us about our God so we can know TRUTH and DWELL in that truth.

20. Every week, we will ask you to evaluate something you have read or heard in light of the TRUTH you are learning—books, social media, billboards—things that sound nice and comfy but may actually lead to or be based upon error in biblical thinking. I may even throw one into the lesson for you to evaluate and discern truth or error. Does anything come to mind that fits with today’s lesson? Use specific verses to discern truth from error in any saying or teaching.

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*Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.*

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast "[Escape the Cultural Captivity Infection](#)" to reinforce what you have learned. Use the following listener guide.

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## Escape the Cultural Captivity Infection

In the last podcast, I told you that any opinion or belief that contradicts established biblical truth can cause an infection in a Christian's heart and mind. It is usually not just error, but anti-truth. Such a spiritual infection always affects life so it must be addressed. A spiritual infection is usually fed by looking to the wrong places to get your heart needs satisfied. The results are disappointment, fear, resentment, and many other negative thoughts and behaviors.

Thankfully, the answer to all spiritual infections is the truth that has been given to us in the Bible, especially in the New Testament. Knowing truth gives us a spiritual immune system that fights and prevents infection in our hearts and minds. Truth is the prescription for healthy living.

The first step, though, is recognizing the infection.

### Dr. Paul diagnosed infection in Colosse.

Paul knew that the Colossians had received the complete gospel from Epaphras. They got God's grace in all its truth. And it was powerful enough to meet their every spiritual need. So what happened?

*See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. (Colossians 2:8)*

### What is the Cultural Captivity Infection?

You have seen enough movies to be able to picture in your mind what it would look like to be taken captive. Some of you have been in bondage to something that has taken you captive. You understand that.

- Paul said hollow and deceptive philosophy had taken them captive.
- Human philosophies that do not worship Christ are under the influence of Satan and his demons.
- Before Christ, we were subject to those "spiritual forces." Through union with Christ, we die to them and are no longer bound to obey them.
- When considering anyone's philosophy, the qualifying test is this: Where does Jesus fit into their thinking and philosophy—as a way to know God or *the* way to know God?

### What makes us susceptible to this Cultural Captivity infection?

"Cultural captivity looks to the culture rather than to Christ and the Bible as truth and a primary guide for living. Cultural captivity is usually caused by 3 things: Putting our trust in something other than the person or promises of Christ. Misunderstanding the truths by which Christ has called us to live. Or, a combination of both." (Probe Ministries, probe.org)

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The Colossian church had been infected with philosophy from their culture. There were three main symptoms of this infection:

- Symptom #1: Dethroning Jesus Christ.
- Symptom #2: Emphasizing works.
- Symptom #3: Elevating experiences.

### **Truth is the Prescription for Cultural Captivity**

In Colossians, Paul writes the strongest statement of the supremacy and deity of Christ found anywhere in the New Testament. The Greek words he used are specific for this infection, just like a doctor's prescription to treat a specific disease. There was no way those reading or listening to this letter could possibly misunderstand anything that Paul was telling them. The truth about Jesus would satisfy their heart needs. They wouldn't need to look anywhere else.

As you study Colossians, you may discover that you have a concept about Jesus Christ, salvation, or the Christian life that is based on man-made tradition or philosophy instead of on Scripture. Do you have the Cultural Captivity infection regarding who Jesus Christ is? For healthy living, you will need to recognize that infection and give it up to accept the truth about Christ presented in God's Word.

Infection is bad. Untreated infection can be deadly. Knowing the truth of God that you have in Jesus Christ gives you an immune system that fights and prevents spiritual infection.

*Let Jesus satisfy your heart needs with His truth and His love so you can get well and stay well.*

Get *Healthy Living* at [melanienewton.com](http://melanienewton.com) as well as most online bookstores.

## Pray & Love Bookmark



### Pray & Love

*"Father, please send the Holy Spirit to work in the heart of \_\_\_ to draw her to Jesus so she will trust in Him."*

Keep on praying that, as many times as you think about or see that person

Ask Jesus to give you His love and compassion for her.

Trust the Holy Spirit to work in that person's life, drawing that person to Jesus.

Join Him as you see what He is doing. Plan a time to meet with her. Show Christ's love to her.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Tammy's Story: Intentional Loving

This past fall I sat by my neighbor Michelle at all the high school football games. She lives with her boyfriend in my neighborhood and is a self-professing agnostic. We laughed and enjoyed each other's company all fall, and our relationship developed. Many of the neighborhood women, including those who identify themselves as Christians, do not want to be seen talking with her let alone going anywhere with her because of her living arrangements. My husband Tom and I have chosen a different relationship, enjoyed their company and growing friendship along the way.

From the beginning, we began praying for them as a couple asking the Lord to reveal himself to them, not because of their living arrangements, but because neither knows Jesus. Rather than holding them at arm's length, we have entered into the long slow pull of intentional, grace-filled friendship that seeks to do nothing more than extend the love of Christ to them, and where opportunity presents itself, speak the truth in love.

By spending time together, I have learned a lot about her life that has helped me understand our relationship better. She grew up in a non-religious family that rarely attended worship services. She had many faith questions as a youth that in her view went unanswered and were avoided by her Catechism teachers at a time in her life when she was open to spiritual things. As the years passed she landed on agnosticism, a belief in something, but not knowing what that something is, or whether that something can even be known. With no understanding of God, the revelation of himself and his precepts found in Scripture, she lacked an understanding that it was against God's standards of holiness to live with someone who is not her husband.

By the end of the football season, I was able to naturally extend an invitation to our Women's Ministry outreach event, a ladies' tea where she sat with some of those same neighbors, and she and her boyfriend joined us for the Christmas Eve service and dinner afterwards. We had an amazing night together, and it is clear God is moving in her life. As we hike together we talk about all kinds of things, including spiritual things.

We have had four other ladies who have started attending our church with stories similar to Michelle's story. In response, my husband Tom offered a class during the school day where they can safely explore the truth claims of the Christian faith. All but one of the ladies decided to attend, plus one more lady from our neighborhood. An older, more spiritually mature woman in our church who is very loving was also willing to come alongside the ladies exploring a relationship to Christ.

After the first class, Michelle and I went hiking together. I learned from her that my husband had privately asked her what drew her to the class. Although I know it is the Holy Spirit that is drawing her, she said, "Your wife's persistence."

I contacted Michelle 7 different ways: 1) sitting by her at football games, 2) inviting her via Facebook, 3) texting her, 4) leaving a message on her phone, 5) dropping the book we would study by her house, 6) calling and reminding her the night before, and 7) being available for hikes.

Sounds persistent, but she respected my perseverance and my excitement I had for her faith growing. Believe in breakthroughs for nonbelievers! Pray creatively and courageously for unbelieving friends and neighbors. You never know who has an opportunity to speak truth as they begin to discover Jesus and His healing. Follow through with a willingness to listen and share the freedom Christ has given you.

# The Biblical Process for Handling Recognized Sin Bookmark

## ***The Biblical Process for Handling Recognized Sin***

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### **1. View yourself rightly.**

*Your identity is not “\_\_\_\_\_” (coveter, greedy, gossip...). You are in Christ, a child of God, who sometimes “\_\_\_\_\_” (covets, is greedy, gossips...).*

### **2. Agree with God (confess) that you are guilty of that behavior.**

*Biblical confession means “to agree with God” about what you and he both know to be true. You are already forgiven.*

### **3. Choose obedience (repentance).**

*Repentance means to change your mind about that sin, to mourn its ugliness, resulting in changing your actions. It’s saying, “I recognize what I am doing is wrong. This fills me with sorrow because it displeases you, God. Please help me to live differently.” Decide you want to live by the Spirit’s power in that area of your life.*

### **4. Depend on the Spirit’s power** by saying,

*“Lord Jesus, I can’t do this, but you can do this in my life. I trust your Spirit to do this in me.”*

*Depend on the Holy Spirit inside you for that change to take place.*

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## Greener-Grass Syndrome: Healing from Adultery

*“We were just platonic friends when he added me as a friend on Facebook. A month later, I decided to leave my husband and children for him. After all, I was so unhappy in my marriage. Shouldn’t I be with someone who makes me happy?”*

Sound familiar? If not, it will, as more and more Christian married women turn to other men to meet their needs. The “Greener-Grass Syndrome” has been around as long as green grass, but with the popularity of social media, the temptation and ease of grazing in someone else’s yard is greater now than ever.

Are you struggling with the “Greener-Grass Syndrome” or know someone who is? If you are having an emotional or physical affair, here are four crucial questions that you need to ask, along with some practical advice for how to get back into your own yard.

### **What Caused the Affair?**

If you are like most women, you were probably drawn into the affair because of an unmet emotional need from your childhood or marriage. Maybe you were sexually abused as a child by a close family member and struggle with being able to trust. Perhaps you are married to a good man, but you somehow feel disconnected and your needs are not being met. Or maybe you feel lonely and unappreciated, because your husband is too busy leading mission trips to concentrate on your marriage.

No one understood what it was like to have unmet needs in a relationship more than the Samaritan woman. Christ reached out to her with compassion and grace, in spite of her having a string of unfulfilled relationships. He gave her an invitation to find intimacy through a relationship with Him when He said, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:13–14 NIV).

After five husbands and who knows how many lovers, this woman finally met the Man who could fill the void in her life. If Christ was able to meet the needs of the Samaritan woman, why can’t He meet yours?

### **When Did the Affair Start?**

Likely, your affair started like most affairs do—with a harmless friendship. Perhaps after a while, you started meeting for coffee regularly and texting throughout the day. Slowly, you let your guard down and began to fantasize about him. In Proverbs 4:23 we are taught, “Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life” (NLT). But you did not guard your heart. You let your boundaries down completely, which led to a full-blown physical affair. For the first few months, it was romantic and exciting, but now, maybe after a year or two, the same old feelings of discontentment and emptiness have returned.

You may also feel stuck—unhappy in your marriage and unhappy in your affair. What should you do? Well, you should end the affair. But how?

### **How Do You End the Affair?**

It is crucial that you write a letter to the other man, dissolving your relationship and ending all communication with him. You must also get a new cell phone number and e-mail address so that you cannot receive any messages and be tempted to respond. If you work with him, you should consider quitting and changing jobs. And if he goes to your church, you will need to switch churches.

These measures might seem extreme, but it is important for you to take severe steps to prevent you from falling back into a relationship with this man, as well as to protect you from an affair happening again in the future. We are reminded in Matthew 5:30, “And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away” (NIV). Obviously, Jesus was not endorsing self-mutilation but rather making a dramatic point in a dramatic way: do whatever it takes to keep yourself free from the sins of lust and adultery.

### ***How Do You Rebuild Your Marriage?***

First, you must seek counsel from your pastor or a trained Christian counselor whom you and your husband can meet with weekly. Second, you will need to confess your sin to the Lord and to your husband. It is often helpful if this is done in the context of meeting with your pastor or counselor. James 5:16 tells us to “confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (NIV). Third, you and your husband need to know how and why the affair happened, as well as place firm boundaries in your marriage to prevent it from happening again.

If you are struggling with the “Greener-Grass Syndrome,” remember that only the Lord can meet all of your needs for intimacy. I pray that the Lord will reveal to you that the grass really is not greener on the other side and that He will give you a desire to cultivate your own marriage.

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## Hannah's Story: The "What For" Quilt

Several years ago, my husband and I were transferred by his company to a rather remote location. Since most of us were from somewhere else, the women connected with my husband's company were drawn together for support and friendship. There was one lady named Nina who would often come who seemed a little awkward socially, a little rough around the edges. And while she was very friendly, I admit that she was not someone I immediately sought out to get to know better.

After being there for about a year, and only having spoken to her at social gatherings, I heard that Nina had had a serious health set back and was basically confined to her house. My vague response of "Oh that's too bad" changed when I had a distinct urge from God to call her to go and visit. I managed to ignore the first two urges, but by the third time, I was pretty sure that I needed to call her. So I dialed her number, introduced myself and said something like, "I wondered if it was okay if I came by." She answered with a flat, sharp, "What for?" Since I could not say that God told me to do it, I drew a breath and stumbled through something like, "I heard you have not been feeling great and thought you might like a visit."

And so I went, with great fear and trembling that I was headed for a very uncomfortable hour with someone who wished I was not there. I had no expectations, no little Bible tract with the gospel written out—just me and some cookies. Her house was jam-packed with mementos and collections, and she had a full quilting studio set up in her basement with twenty different projects in various stages of completion. This was my first, but not my last, clue that she had ADD. It turned out to be very easy for me to show interest in her collections and in her quilting. She spent most of her time working on quilts for other people: her children, her siblings and their children, and her medical specialists. I told her I had started a quilt about ten years before and never completed it, and that began a more than two-year routine of us getting together every available Thursday to quilt together for the day.

It took a while for her to believe that I really wanted to come, that it was not just a pity thing. Her husband did not approve. He was very protective of her, and he was extremely private, so he did not like the idea of having a crossover from work to personal life. It also took a while for her to trust me. But we gradually shared about our children and our pasts, and I understood that her crusty attitude had a lot to do with protection from having been hurt many times. I learned that she had been a special education teacher and had a real connection with the children because of her empathy and understanding. She was very smart, remembered absolutely everything, was extremely creative, and was hilarious, although I often had to keep from wincing at her language.

Just to paint you a picture – these Thursdays were exhausting for me. I had to pack up lunch and supplies and drive about 40 minutes each way to her house (in between my kids being home from school). Spending the day with Nina was mentally exhausting. I was always a couple of steps behind her conversation, because she moved so fast, jumped from topic to topic, and threw in phrases and short forms (and language) that I was not used to. Also, because of how easily hurt she was, I always had to be careful with my responses. This did improve with time, as we got used to each other. And in case you are thinking of it – do not learn to quilt from a person with ADHD. I had to give up all of my perfectionist tendencies and just go with it. I never knew what new project she was going to have ready, or what fabric she would buy online and have ready for us to sew. Sometimes I would take her out to the quilt store. Once I even took her clothes shopping, since the combination of medicines and inactivity had made her grow out of her clothes.

While Nina had a religious background, she had not really grasped just how much Jesus loved her, and I do not think she really understood that He changes us from the inside, rather than us just trying to be good in order to get to heaven. I was very careful with what I said because I could tell

that her faith framework was very important to her. I always just went with the conversation and spoke truth.

She came from a very large family, which seemed to have a weird form of passive aggressive manipulating as their main way of communicating. So, of course, there were many awkward moments as she would tell me what latest drama was going on or how she was dealing with her children. I would try not to give bug eyes, but she was a very good observer. And we got to the point where she would say to me, "You don't think that's a good idea, do you?"

Within a year or so, Nina had to go on oxygen. A good friend of mine started coming along to our quilting days, and so Thursdays became a real treat for Nina. As her husband took over more and more of the cooking, sometimes she would tell us that we did not have to bring lunch because he had cooked up a treat for us all.

It was a long time before I told Nina that it was a God-thing that I called her in the first place. When it was time for us to move to our next work assignment, she made me a quilt that she named "What For" because, of course, she remembered exactly her response to that initial phone call and was very thankful that I persisted. God used me to bless her by just showing up in her home with love and no expectations.

I wish I could end this with a story of me witnessing some amazing spiritual breakthrough, but that is not the case. I do know that I loved on her as her health continued to disintegrate. She passed away a few years ago, and our last contact was by phone. She was drugged up and oxygen deprived and scared. I was able to pray for her and promise her that I would continue to pray for her children. And I came away from the relationship with a realization that there is always more to a person than first meets the eye and that we need to do a whole lot more listening and understanding and appreciating before we can be in position to speak into another's life.

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## Allison's Story: Coming Alongside Monica

My story is your story. It is a telling of making yourself available to God in the ordinary. However, when we make ourselves available to God and His agenda, what seems common becomes extraordinary. We serve a humble God who partakes in the "small" of our lives and writes the most beautiful stories.

I am a member of a newly planted church. At the time of my story, our church was on a tight budget. At one of our meetings, the pastor presented the budget and said that our church did not have the funds to pay a housekeeper. The meeting was held right after our church service that day, and many members and non-members were there. I raised my hand and said I would be willing to clean and try to set up a team to take care of this job once a week.

The next Sunday, two beautiful young ladies came up to me and asked if they could help me with the weekly cleaning. I had never laid eyes on either Monica or Ronda before and teased them about being ministering angels.

The following week, we met and talked a bit before we cleaned. I began to learn that neither of them had been attending a church for a while and that they lived together along with Monica's boyfriend Mark. I shared my testimony with them and asked them about their faith journey and a bit about their background. That day as I was driving home I realized this was about more than cleaning. The Lord had just laid into my hands the opportunity to disciple.

The pastor met with both Monica and her boyfriend Mark to encourage them to move out of their living arrangement. Mark attended our church alongside Monica and had come from a different church background.

Monica and I met after our cleaning time one week for coffee, and she asked me some questions about the Lord and her life. When I counseled her, she became agitated and said, "You sound just like my mother!" I told her I was a mother and tried to express to her how I cared. I wondered if this would change our relationship, but God had plans for Monica and me.

Ronda, the other young lady, leaned into our relationship a little more than Monica, and I thought maybe she was the one that God intended for me to spend more time in discipling. I did at first, but as time went on, circumstances took her to a job that made it hard to meet because of distance.

After about a year, our church budget was able to support a housekeeper, and we no longer needed to clean. By this time, Monica and I had become good friends. She was originally from another state, and I believe she eventually enjoyed the fact that I was like her mother. I saw her make great leaps by moving closer to her job and living with another roommate.

One Sunday, I noticed on Facebook that Monica had gone for a walk earlier that morning and expressed gratitude to God for her life. This was a new attitude for her. I had just been to a discipling training event a few months earlier, and I felt the Holy Spirit prompt me to ask her if she would be willing to meet for a Bible study. As I walked out of the prayer room that Sunday morning, Monica was standing right there! I knew what that meant, so I asked her what she thought of meeting, and she said excitedly, "Yes!" She said she had wanted to do a study.

After praying and asking the Lord about this, during my first meeting with Monica, I asked her what she would enjoy doing during our meetings. She replied that she wanted to learn more about cooking. So, the first time we met, we roasted a chicken together!

We also chose a Bible study to do together that would give her a good foundation for her faith. I did my best to make the time and place easy for Monica because she lived forty minutes away. It was such a joy to meet with her. At first, I could tell that she was developing a new habit of being in the

Word of God, and it was not always easy for her to make the time or feel confident about the study. I was humbled when she would ask me questions. Sometimes I did not know the answers, and I would tell her that I would do my best to find it out. We prayed about her job, her family, and her boyfriend and thanked the Lord for putting us together. She really wanted to get married, and I encouraged her to wait on the Lord and trust that He had His best in mind for her.

The trials would continue to come, and she would find herself seeking the Lord more. It was so beautiful to watch. Mark, while visiting family, was taken to jail for an offense. He began to ask us to pray about the outcome of this situation and the court case. The Lord had given my husband and I a real heart for this young couple. The men at church prayed with Mark and graciously guided him to a deeper dependence on God.

As months went by, Mark and Monica became like a new couple. They altered their time together to be more productive instead of wasting time partying. They both were changing right before our eyes. Monica began building relationships with several of the women at church and found support through their examples and friendship. She even led an exercise program one night a week as an outreach ministry.

We sometimes would just talk when we met. It was not a forced or restricted time together. I felt pressed to allow the Lord to work through our time for what He saw to be most important. Sometimes we would walk her dog afterwards and just laugh and share.

Mark was put on probation, and he was concerned that he would have to serve it out in another state where the offense was made. However, through prayer he received the good news that he could stay at his job and home during the probation.

Soon after, he proposed to Monica! We continued to meet a few times, but job and wedding plans took the front stage. My husband and I felt like surrogate parents at their wedding. It was so special to be a part of this beautiful story!

Now that Monica is married, we do not spend as much time together. She now works and lives a good distance away. But I know that regardless of this, we will always be close at heart.

Monica has expressed that she feels a calling to reach out to young women and guide them in the Lord. She is now beginning to be a leader and disciple others. Multiplication is the fruit of discipling.

Monica and I met just a few days ago. She still has questions, dreams and hopes in which she asks for guidance. I am humbled. God does use the ordinary.

As a side note, I do not hear from Ronda. I pray for her. I know God did not introduce me to her in vain. Sometimes, we disciple, and the person moves out of our lives; sometimes they stay. Sometimes our discipling seems disappointing and does not seem as successful as Monica's story. We have to trust that it is all in God's hands and just remain available.

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# Ways to Explain the Gospel

## Evantell.Org

1. Has anyone ever taken a Bible and shown you how you can know you are going to heaven? May I?
2. The Bible contains both bad news and good news. The bad news is something about you and me, and the good news is something about God. Let us discuss the bad news first.
  - Bad News #1 — We are all sinners. *Romans 3:23*
  - Bad News #2—The penalty for sin is death. *Romans 6:23*
3. Since there was no way you could come to God, the Bible says that God decided to come to you.
  - Good News #1—Christ died for you. *Romans 5:8*
  - Good News #2—You can be saved through faith in Christ. *Ephesians 2:8-9*
4. Is there anything keeping you from trusting Christ right now? Would you like to pray right now and tell God you are trusting His Son as your Savior?

You can watch a free online training video at <http://evantell.org>.

## Bridge to Life (Navigators)

1. The Bible teaches that God loves all humans and wants them to know him. *John 10:10; Romans 5:1*
2. But humans have sinned against God and are separated from God and his love. *Draw a chasm*. This separation leads only to death and judgment. *Romans 3:23; Isaiah 59:2*
3. But there is a solution. *Draw bridge*. Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins (the bridge between humanity and God). *1 Peter 3:18; 1 Timothy 2:5; Romans 5:8*
4. Only those who personally receive Jesus Christ into their lives, trusting him to forgive their sins, can cross this bridge. Everyone must decide individually whether to receive Christ. *John 3:16; John 5:24*

## Four Spiritual Laws (Cru)

1. God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life. *John 3:16; 10:10*
2. Humans are sinful and separated from God. Thus, they cannot know and experience God's love and plan for their lives. *Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23*
3. Jesus Christ is God's only provision for humanity's sin. Through Jesus, you can know and experience God's love and plan for your life. *Romans 5:8; John 14:6*
4. We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives. *John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8-9*

You can access this online at [www.godlife.com](http://www.godlife.com).

## Using John 3:16

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

1. “Has anyone introduced you to Jesus so you could know Him? May I?”
2. **God loves**—God is real. He loves you with an unconditional, never-ending love. **“For God loves you \_\_\_\_\_ (name) so much...”** He created you to have a relationship with Him. But we cannot experience this loving personal relationship because of sin in our lives. Sin is disobeying God. It puts a barrier between us and a holy God. No matter how hard you try, you cannot be good enough on your own to overcome this sin barrier. The penalty for sin is death. But God’s love had a plan...
3. **God gave**— **“God gave His one and only Son”** *Jesus* – to live as a human without sin and then to take the penalty for our sin on himself when he died on the cross. He was buried as a dead man then raised from the dead to be alive again. He did this so that our sins could be forgiven.
4. **We believe God’s love**— **“Whoever believes in Him”** – Faith is trust. God asks that we trust in His plan, admit our sin and desire for a relationship with Him. Accept what Jesus did on the cross for us out of love.
5. **We receive what God gave**— **“Shall not perish but have eternal life”** – Everyone dies and ends up somewhere. To perish means to die separated from God and His love for you. Eternal life means you can enjoy a forever-family relationship with God and promise of living securely with Him now and after your life on earth ends.
6. When offered a gift you want, you take it and say thank you. It is forever yours. Is there anything keeping you from trusting in Jesus right now?

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# “My Faith Story” Worksheet Option 1

## Specific Turning Point Leading to Salvation

Use this option:

If you became a Christian as a teen or adult & remember what life was like before knowing Him OR

If you trusted Christ as a child, then drifted far away only to come back later in life. Focus on what caused you to come back to Him and choose to be His disciple now.

### ***Before I trusted in Christ***

Although the tendency is to spend most of the time on your “before Christ” experience, only give enough information so the women know why you needed Christ in your life. Tell them what you needed so that some may identify with you.

1. Identify what your life was like. What were your attitudes, needs, and/or problems? From what did you get your security or happiness? How did those areas begin to disappoint you? To what source did you look for security, peace of mind, or happiness? In what ways were your activities unsatisfying?
2. Find 2-3 words to describe what only Christ could fill or do in your life (e.g. loneliness, feelings of insignificance, anger, rejection).
3. Briefly share a personal example that captures the needs and attitudes from this time of your life as identified above.

### ***How you came to know Christ (point of salvation)***

Share when and how you first heard the gospel and/or were exposed to Christianity. What brought you to the place of being willing to listen? Who influenced you? How and when did you decide to follow Jesus? Describe how you felt, what truths you heard, what you thought about them, how you felt after you made the decision. Give the gospel in this section. Use 1 or 2 relevant scripture verses.

***My life after knowing Jesus***

1. Spend the most time on this. What conditions in your life before Christ has now been satisfied by a relationship with Him? What does it look like in your life to have a relationship with Christ? How long did it take before you noticed changes? What are your blessings? Where do you struggle? How do you depend on Him through those struggles? What difference does it make to have Him in your life during those times? Emphasize what you have learned about God's grace to you.
  
2. Briefly share a personal illustration that shows the wonderful difference that Christ has made in your life.

**Wrap up by inviting them to trust in Christ as you did!**

***Write your five-minute faith story.***

Whether you like to be spontaneous or need everything written down, it helps to script what you will say. It forces you to think through what you will say to maintain your main idea. It helps you to manage your allowed time. Write it as you would speak it—shorter sentences, peppy words that are clear and simple. Use everyday terminology. For example, instead of saying “my testimony,” say “the story of my life.” See “Screen Your Language” on page 156 for other alternatives. Include specific illustrations that give them snapshots of your life, not only general descriptions of your life events. Practice telling your story several times. Make eye contact with the listener to draw her into your story.

Write out your five-minute faith story. Remember only spend 30% of the time on your “before,” just enough to have them identify with your need at that time. Spend another 30% on the decision time, and spend the rest of the time on what knowing Christ has done for you. Always end by inviting them to join your adventure.

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## “My Faith Story” Worksheet Option 2

Believer to Christ-Follower (Disciple)

Use this option if you became a Christian as a child and stayed faithful to Him through the years, choosing to become His disciple as a teen or adult.

Those who trust Christ as children often feel they "have nothing to tell" because they do not have a dramatic story. Yet, your story is the one every parent wants for their children! For childhood believers, there occurs a later, mature decision to follow Christ as His disciple where more obvious life changes occurred. Therefore, focus on that later turning point in telling your story. Although the tendency is to spend most of the time on your “before” experience, only give enough information so the women know why you needed Christ in your life so they can identify with you.

### ***Before I became Jesus’ disciple***

1. Identify what your life was like as a young Christian or living as just a believer not a disciple. Share when and how you first heard the gospel and/or were exposed to Christianity. What were your attitudes, needs, and/or problems? From what did you get your security or happiness?
2. Briefly share a personal example that captures the needs and attitudes from this time of your life as identified above.
3. Although the tendency is to spend most of the time on your “before” experience, only give enough information so the women know why you needed to trust Christ more with your life.

### ***What brought you to decide to become Jesus’ disciple***

What brought you to the place of being willing to listen or of wanting to be more than just a believer? Who influenced you? How and when did you decide to be Jesus’ disciple? Describe how you felt, what truths you heard, what you thought about them, how you felt after you made the decision. Give the gospel in this section if you have not already done so in the previous section. Use 1 or 2 relevant scripture verses that God used to draw you to Himself. Emphasize what you have learned about God’s grace to you.

***My life after becoming Jesus' disciple***

1. Spend the most time on this. What conditions before this time has now been satisfied by a deeper relationship with Him? How long did it take before you noticed changes? What does it look like in your life to have this closer relationship with Christ? What are your blessings? Where do you struggle? How do you depend on Him through those struggles? What difference does it make to have Him in your life during those times? What remarkable thing has Jesus done in your life (or in the last three years)?
2. Briefly share a personal illustration that shows the wonderful difference that following Christ has made in your life.

**Wrap up by inviting them to trust in Christ as you did!**

***Write your five-minute faith story.***

Whether you like to be spontaneous or need everything written down, it helps to script what you will say. It forces you to think through what you will say to maintain your main idea. It helps you to manage your allowed time. Write it as you would speak it—shorter sentences, peppy words that are clear and simple. Use every day terminology. For example, instead of saying “my testimony,” say “the story of my life.” See “Screen Your Language” on page 156 for other alternatives. Include specific illustrations that give them snapshots of your life, not only general descriptions of your life events. Practice telling your story several times. Make eye contact with the listener to draw her into your story.

Write out your five-minute faith story. Remember only spend 30% of the time on your “before,” just enough to have them identify with your need at that time. Spend another 30% on the decision time, and spend the rest of the time on what knowing Christ has done for you. Always end by inviting them to join your adventure.

## Screen Your Language

*The following is taken from Stonecroft Speaker Workshop, sponsored by Stonecroft Ministries.*

### Unlearning the Lingo

Many of the words we use to share our faith may be meaningless, too churchy or clichéd to the people we are attempting to reach. If you were an unbeliever, would you understand the following? (Note: Common Christian clichés are underlined.)

I heard the plan of salvation and was told that I needed to be saved. So, I went forward to be born again. The Lord spoke to me and then opened the door of my heart to show me God's plan for my life. I learned to stand on God's word and began to walk with the Lord. I turned away from worldly things, and it has been such a blessing.

Instead of these clichés (left), what could you say (alternatives on the right)?

Cliché	Alternative
Scripture or Bible verse	<i>A place in the Bible where it says...</i>
Believe	<i>Trust, accept</i>
Born again, converted	<i>Changed, transformed (with explanation)</i>
Christian	<i>Follower of Christ</i>
Confess	<i>Admit, agree with God</i>
Found the Lord, got saved	<i>Accept Christ make a decision to follow Christ</i>
Grace	<i>God's totally unearned forgiveness</i>
Gospel	<i>God loves us and sent His Son so that we can find forgiveness and new life through Him</i>
Have a burden	<i>Be concerned</i>
Know	<i>Believe, trust, be certain</i>
The Lord	<i>God, Creator, Jesus</i>
The Holy Spirit	<i>God's Spirit, the Spirit of God</i>
Praise	<i>Thanking God for His greatness</i>
Pray	<i>Talk with God, ask God</i>
Preach	<i>Talk about</i>
Repent	<i>To be sorry about wrongs and to turn from them to do right</i>
Salvation, saved	<i>Forgiven of wrongs and given eternal life</i>
Savior	<i>Jesus, God's Son, who forgave my wrongs and gave me eternal life</i>
Share	<i>Discuss, explain</i>
Sin, sinner	<i>Acting against God's will and offending God's character; the wrong things that we do</i>
Testimony	<i>Telling my story</i>
Witness	<i>Tell, show</i>
Worship	<i>Giving honor and glory to God</i>

Other commonly used “churchy” terms also could be baffling to a nonbeliever. What could you use instead of the following:

- \* Into my heart—
- \* Lord of my life—
- \* Rely on the Lord—
- \* Raised in a Christian home—
- \* The Lord told me/spoke to me/directed me—
- \* Total surrender—

In most cases, you may want to avoid using theological words such as *justification* or the *sovereignty of God* unless you explain them well.

If you are praying with nonbelievers present, even with believers, be careful how often you address God by name in prayer. Prayer is simply talking to God. In normal speech, you would not continually repeat someone’s name, but many Christians think it necessary to mention God’s name after every five words or so. This is disconcerting to non-Christians. Write out your prayer if this is a temptation for you.

Above all, be real and be normal.

### **Avoid Inappropriate Information**

Be cautious about using these in your faith story.

- Use discretion in naming religions, churches, denominations, or cults.
- Controversial issues such as doctrinal, political and social issues.
- Derogatory remarks relating to any person, place, group, or issue.
- Promoting any project, campaign, business, cause, or financial need.
- If you refer to any person, especially family members, could this cause embarrassment or conflict?

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# Small Group Discussion Guide

## Introduction

The following guide is designed for groups that meet for about 1½ hours or less. You will notice that some questions are skipped for the sake of time. These are only suggestions for you.

Ask the group to listen to the first podcast “*New Testament Women Learn How Jesus Satisfies Our Hearts*” before coming to the first meeting. Help them find it by sending them a link to [melanienewton.com/podcasts](http://melanienewton.com/podcasts). Look for Series 2.

### Introduction to Study

It is not necessary to have a separate week for introducing the study. However, it is a good use of time to get to know one another and give them a vision for the study as a whole.

- Start with prayer. Pray for the group to learn from Jesus what He wants them to know and to learn to love one another well to build our community.
- Make sure everyone has a book, a schedule, and Bible / Bible app and knows how to use it. Ask if anyone is new to the Bible and plan to come alongside her during the week.
- Use an icebreaker to get to know one another, especially something that they might share as women. Ask a general question or two such as, “Share your name, where you live, and an activity you enjoy when you have time to do so.” Avoid talking about families on the first day if you have some who are single and/or without children.

### Introduce the study

- Look at the “Contents” page to see the lesson titles.
- Introduction Page 1. Read the top paragraph and “The Basic Study” section.
- Tell them how to find the podcasts ([melanienewton.com/podcasts](http://melanienewton.com/podcasts) or any podcast platform).
- Read “Discussion Group Guidelines.” Add anything else pertinent to your group.
- Read the “What Happened before New Testament Times” and “New Testament Summary” sections, especially for those not familiar with the Bible.
- Point out “Israel’s Leaders” chart and the description of each group for future reference.
- Read the “Live Out His Love” section and discuss.
- Discuss the podcast. Read “God is...” statements under “Knowing who God is.” Read the first paragraph under “Knowing what He says” (page 19). Read the two aspects of trusting God. Ask, “Have you seen that in your life?” Read the first paragraph under “Knowing and Trusting God Lead to Thankfulness.” Read Malachi 3:16. Read the next two paragraphs.
- Read together the italicized paragraph on page 7. This is the theme for the study.

### Prayer

- Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

Recommendation: Listen to a worship song such as “Lord, I Lift Your Name on High.”

## Lesson 1: A Samaritan Woman

Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion. My recommendations are below.

Start with prayer for Jesus to teach each of you something from His Word today.

*Get Acquainted:* What satisfies your thirst in the morning?

### **Day One Study**

- What grabbed your attention from the information on page 9 and top of page 10?
- Q1. Read John 2:24-25 but not the rest.
- Q2 and “Historical Insight.” Q3 if anyone did it.
- Q4 and “Scriptural Insight.”

### **Day Two Study**

- Read John 4:4-26.
- Questions 5-7.
- Q8.

### **Day Three Study**

- Questions 9-11 and “From the Greek.”
- Read *Conversation Starters and Transitions*.
- Q12. Spend some time on this to encourage preparation for future conversations with nonbelievers.

### **Day Four Study**

- Read John 4:27-42. Cover Questions 13-16.
- Q17. Read and let the women know to talk with you if this is on their heart.
- Q18. Point out the bookmark in the Resources Section for them to use.
- Q19. Break up into groups of 3-4 to discuss Question 18. After 5 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

### **Other**

- Discuss the podcast.
- Read together the italicized paragraph at the end of the podcast notes.

### **Prayer**

- Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

Recommendation: Listen to a worship song such as “Build My Life.”

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## Lesson 2: An Immoral Woman

Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion. My recommendations are below.

Start with prayer for Jesus to teach each of you something from His Word today.

*Get Acquainted:* What is your favorite main dish to serve to guests?

### **Day One Study**

- Ask for comments on historical information on page 19.
- Qs 1-3. Skip reading the verses and just ask what they learned from this section.
- Q4.

### **Day Two Study**

- Read Luke 7:36-50. Q5 and Think About It
- Qs6 & 7 and “Historical Insight.”
- Q8 if anyone did it.

### **Day Three Study**

- Qs 9-14.
- Read John 17:15-20. Cover Q15 first bullet point.
- Table Talk: Q15 second bullet point. Break up into groups of 3-4 to cover this. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

### **Day Four Study**

- Qs 16&17 and “Focus on the Meaning.”
- Q18. Q19 is personal.
- Q20. Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.
- Ask if anyone read Tammy’s story and has comments about it. Does anyone have a similar story to share?

### **Other**

- Discuss the podcast. Reference the “Biblical Process for Handling Recognized Sin” bookmark in the Resources Section.
- Read together the italicized paragraph at the end of the podcast notes.

### **Prayer**

- Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

Recommendation: Listen to a worship song such as “Before the Throne.”

## Lesson 3: An Adulterous Woman

Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion. My recommendations are below.

Start with prayer for Jesus to teach each of you something from His Word today.

*Get Acquainted:* What is your work experience?

### **Day One Study**

- Ask for comments on historical information.
- Skip reading John 7:1-53. Cover Q1.
- Qs2-4

### **Day Two Study**

- Read John 8:1-11. Qs5-10.
- Q11.

### **Day Three Study**

- Qs12-16.
- Q17.
- Ask if anyone read and has comments on “Greener-Grass Syndrome.”

### **Day Four Study**

- Qs18-20. Read the verses
- Q21. Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover this. After 5 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

### **Other**

- Discuss the podcast.
- Read together the italicized paragraph at the end of the podcast notes.

### **Prayer**

- Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

Recommendation: Listen to a worship song such as “Lord I Need You.”

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## Lesson 4: A Sick Woman & A Dead Girl

Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion. My recommendations are below.

Start with prayer for Jesus to teach each of you something from His Word today.

*Get Acquainted:* Where have you experienced a crowd closing in on you tightly?

### **Day One Study**

- Ask for comments on historical information.
- Q1.
- Q2. Read the Luke passage.
- Qs3-4.

### **Day Two Study**

- Read the Mark passage.
- Qs5-7 and extra readings on the page.
- Qs8-9.
- Q10. Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover this. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

### **Day Three Study**

- Q11. Read the verses. Skip “Historical Insight.”
- Q12. Skip the reading that follows.
- Q13. Read the verses.
- Qs14-19.
- Q 20. Talk about how hard it is to wait and keep believing.

### **Day Four Study**

- Q21 and Think About It.
- Q22, first bullet point. Cover together in large group.
- Q22, second bullet point. Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover this. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

### **Other**

- Discuss the podcast.
- Read together the italicized paragraph at the end of the podcast notes.

### **Prayer**

- Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

Recommendation: Listen to a worship song such as “You Are God Alone.”

## Lesson 5: A Canaanite & A Crippled Woman

Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion. My recommendations are below.

Start with prayer for Jesus to teach each of you something from His Word today.

*Get Acquainted:* Share everyone's ethnic backgrounds.

### **Day One Study**

- Ask for comments on historical information.
- Q1. Skip reading the verses.
- Q2. Read Mark 7:24-30.
- Qs3-4. Skip reading the verses in Q4.
- Qs5-8.

### **Day Two Study**

- Q9 and "Scriptural Insight."
- Qs10-12 and "From the Greek."
- Skip Q13.
- Q14. Talk about ideas that help you remember to pray.

### **Day Three Study**

- Comments on the historical information.
- Qs15-19.
- Q20.
- Ask if anyone read or has comments on "The 'What For' Quilt."

### **Day Four Study**

- Ask Qs 21-22.
- Qs24-25.
- Q26. Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover this. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

### **Other**

- Discuss the podcast.
- Read together the italicized paragraph at the end of the podcast notes.

### **Prayer**

- Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

Recommendation: Listen to a worship song such as "Build My Life."

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## Lesson 6: Widow of Nain

Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion. My recommendations are below.

Start with prayer for Jesus to teach each of you something from His Word today.

*Get Acquainted:* Have you experienced the death of a child or grandchild?

### **Day One Study**

- Ask for comments on historical information.
- Summarize Question 1.
- Qs 2-3. Read the verses for Question 1 but not for Question 2 unless you have plenty of time.
- Q4.

### **Day Two Study**

- Q5. Read Luke 7:11-15. Skip “Historical Insight.”
- Qs 6-8. Q9 if someone did it.
- Q10.

### **Day Three Study**

- Q11. Skip “From the Greek.”
- Q12. Read the verses. Read the paragraph and Scriptural Insight that follows.
- Q13.
- Q14. Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover this. After 5 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

### **Day Four Study**

- Qs 15-16.
- Q17. Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover this. After 5 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

### **Other**

- Discuss the podcast.
- Read together the italicized paragraph at the end of the podcast notes.

### **Prayer**

- Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

Recommendation: Listen to a worship song such as “Blessed Be the Name.”

## Lesson 7: Mary & Martha

Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion. My recommendations are below.

Start with prayer for Jesus to teach each of you something from His Word today.

*Get Acquainted:* Did you have any sisters? Were you alike or different?

### **Day One Study**

- Ask for comments on historical information.
- Read Luke 10:38-42. Qs1-3.
- Q4. Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover this. After 5 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

### **Day Two Study**

- Read John 11:1-16. Qs 5-6.
- Read John 11:17-37. Qs7-9 and Think About It.
- Q10 and “From the Greek.”
- Q11. Read John 11:38-45.
- Qs12-14.

### **Day Three Study**

- Skip Q15.
- Read the information at the top of page 75. Q16.
- Q17. Read John 12:1-11.
- Qs18-19.
- Qs20-21.
- Q22. Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover this. After 5 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

### **Day Four Study**

- Read paragraphs. Qs23-24.
- Q25 if time.

### **Other**

- Discuss the podcast.
- Read together the italicized paragraph at the end of the podcast notes.

### **Prayer**

- Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

Recommendation: Listen to a worship song such as “Your Love Never Fails.”

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## Lesson 8: Mary Magdalene

Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion. My recommendations are below.

Start with prayer for Jesus to teach each of you something from His Word today.

*Get Acquainted:* What is good about having followers? What is bad about having followers?

### **Day One Study**

- Ask for comments on historical information.
- Q1. Read all the verses and answers in the chart.
- Q2 and Think About It.
- Q3. Point out that contrary to what might have been construed in that culture, these women were not serving as prostitutes for the men.
- Q4.

### **Day Two Study**

- Qs5-6 and “Historical Insight.”
- Qs7-8 and paragraph at bottom of page.
- Qs9-11.

### **Day Three Study**

- Q12 chart.
- Q13 and “Historical Insight.”
- Q14. Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover this. Give them 5-10 minutes. Ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

### **Day Four Study**

- Q15. Read John 20:1-18.
- Q16. Read John 20:14-18. Skip “Focus on the Meaning.”
- Qs17-18.
- Q19. Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover this. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

### **Other**

- Discuss the podcast.
- Read together the italicized paragraph at the end of the podcast notes.

### **Prayer**

- Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

Recommendation: Listen to a worship song such as “Be unto Your Name.”

## Lesson 9: Mary, Jesus' Mom

Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion. My recommendations are below.

Start with prayer for Jesus to teach each of you something from His Word today.

Be sensitive to each other's background concerning Mary. Focus on the Scriptures.

*Get Acquainted:* Did you have a godly mom? What did you learn from her?

### **Day One Study**

- Ask for comments on historical information.
- Read Luke 1:26-45. Q1 and "From the Greek."
- Qs2-4.
- Read Luke 1:39-49. Qs5-8. Skip Q9 (similar to Q17).

### **Day Two Study**

- Read Matthew 1:18-25. Q10 and paragraph that follows.
- Qs11-12. Skip reading Luke 2:1-7 as this is a familiar story.
- Q13. Read Luke 2:8-20.
- Qs14-16. Skip reading the verses.
- Q17. Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover this. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

### **Day Three Study**

- Qs18-19. Read Luke 2:41-52.
- Q20. Read verses and "Scriptural Insight."
- Qs21-22.

### **Day Four Study**

- Q23. Skip reading the verses. Skip Q24.
- Q25. Read John 19:25-27 and "Scriptural Insight."
- Q26. Read Acts 1:12-14 and "Historical Insight."
- Q30. Discuss Mary's character qualities that you would like to have as well.

### **Other**

- Discuss the podcast.
- Read together the italicized paragraph at the end of the podcast notes.

### **Prayer**

- Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

Recommendation: Listen to a worship song such as "Be unto Your Name."

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## Lesson 10: Tabitha & Lydia

Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion. My recommendations are below.

Start with prayer for Jesus to teach each of you something from His Word today.

*Get Acquainted:*

### **Day One Study**

- Qs1-2. Read verses.
- Q3. Read Acts 3:9-11, 16, and 19. Read Think About It.
- Q4. Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover this. Give them 5-10 minutes. Ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

### **Day Two Study**

- Ask for comments on historical information.
- Q5. Read Acts 9:36-43 and "From the Greek."
- Q6 and "Scriptural Insight."
- Qs7-10.

### **Day Three Study**

- Ask for comments on historical information.
- Q11. Read Acts 16:11-15 and "Historical Insight."
- Qs12-13.
- Q14 if someone did this. Read "Historical Insight."
- Qs15-17.

### **Day Four Study**

- Q18. Read Acts 16:16-40.
- Qs19-20.
- Qs21-22. Read just the Philippians verses.
- Q23. Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover this. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.

### **Other**

- Discuss the podcast.
- Read together the italicized paragraph at the end of the podcast notes.

### **Prayer**

- Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

Recommendation: Listen to a worship song such as "Build My Life."

## Lesson 11: Priscilla & Phoebe

Choose ahead of time which verses from the questions the group will read aloud as you proceed through the discussion. My recommendations are below.

Start with prayer for Jesus to teach each of you something from His Word today.

*Get Acquainted:*

### **Day One Study**

- Ask for comments on historical information.
- Q1. Read Acts 18:1-17.
- Qs2-6.
- Qs7-8. Read Acts 18:18-23.
- Q9. Table Talk: break up into groups of 3-4 to cover this. After 5-10 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share with the large group.
- Read "Think About It."

### **Day Two Study**

- Qs10-11. Read Acts 18:18-28.
- Q12 if anyone did that.
- Q13. Discuss and read the key steps at the bottom of the page and the paragraphs at the top of the next page. Ask if anyone read and has comments on "Allison's Story."
- Qs14-16. Read Romans 16:3-5 and 2 Timothy 4:19.
- Q17.

### **Day Three Study**

- Q18. Read Romans 16:1-2 and "From the Greek."
- Qs19-22.
- Qs23-24. Skip reading the verses full of hard names!
- Q25.

### **Day Four Study**

- Read "Final Thoughts." Qs26-28.

### **Other**

- Discuss the podcast.
- Read together the italicized paragraph at the end of the podcast notes.

### **Prayer**

- Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

Recommendation: Listen to a worship song such as "Build My Life."

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## Sources

The following resources were used in the preparation and writing of this study.

1. "Create Your Own 3 Word Testimony" originally accessed at [evantell.org](http://evantell.org).
2. A.T. Robertson, *Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament*, Broadman Press, 1932.
3. Barry D. Jones, *Dwell: Life with God for the World*
4. Dorothy L. Sayers, *Are Women Human?* p. 47
5. *Dr. Tom Constable's Notes on Luke* accessed at [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)
6. *Dr. Tom Constable's Notes on Acts* accessed at [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)
7. *Handbook of Life in Bible Times*
8. *Jesus Cares for Women* by Helene Ashker, Navigator Press.
9. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, Victor Books, 1985.
10. Map used in Lessons 11-12 from [www.thebiblejourney.org](http://www.thebiblejourney.org).
11. Melanie Newton, *Lifestyle Disciplemaking Training*
12. *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*
13. *New Unger's Bible Dictionary*
14. Sue Bohlin, "Christianity: The Best Thing That Ever Happened to Women," [www.probe.org](http://www.probe.org)
15. *The NIV Study Bible New International Version*, Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1985.
16. Vickie Kraft teaching notes on New Testament women
17. Why would Mary wipe Jesus' feet with her hair, accessed at <https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/25745/john-123-why-would-mary-wipe-jesus-feet-with-her-hair>